

1 **Towards a satellite formaldehyde – in situ hybrid estimate for**  
2 **organic aerosol abundance**

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31 **Abstract**

32 Organic aerosol (OA) is one of the main components of the global particulate burden and  
33 intimately links natural and anthropogenic emissions with air quality and climate. It is  
34 challenging to accurately represent OA in global models. Direct quantification of global  
35 OA abundance is not possible with current remote sensing technology; however, it may  
36 be possible to exploit correlations of OA with remotely observable quantities to infer OA  
37 spatiotemporal variability. In particular, formaldehyde (HCHO) and OA share common  
38 sources via both primary emissions and secondary production from oxidation of volatile  
39 organic compounds (VOCs). We examine OA-HCHO correlations using data from  
40 summer-time airborne campaigns investigating biogenic (NASA SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and DC3),  
41 biomass burning (NASA SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS) and anthropogenic conditions (NOAA CalNex and  
42 NASA KORUS-AQ). In situ OA correlates well with HCHO ( $r = 0.59 - 0.97$ ) but the  
43 slope and intercept of this relationship vary with chemical regime. For biogenic and  
44 anthropogenic regions, the OA-vs-HCHO slope is higher in low NO<sub>x</sub> conditions, where  
45 HCHO yields are lower and aerosol yields are likely higher. The OA-vs-HCHO slope of  
46 wild fires is more than 9 times higher than that associated with biogenic and  
47 anthropogenic sources. Near-surface OA over the continental US are estimated by  
48 combining observed in situ relationships with HCHO column retrievals from NASA's  
49 Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI). HCHO vertical profiles used in OA estimates are  
50 from climatology a-priori profiles in the OMI HCHO retrieval or output of specific  
51 period from a newer version of GEOS-Chem. We evaluate these OA estimates against  
52 OA observations from the US EPA IMPROVE network and simulated OA from the  
53 GEOS-Chem global chemical transport model. The OA estimates compare well with

54 IMPROVE data obtained over summer months (e.g. slope = 0.60-0.62,  $r = 0.56$  for  
55 August 2013), comparable to intensively validated GEOS-Chem performance (e.g. slope  
56 = 0.57,  $r = 0.56$ ) and superior to the correlation with satellite-derived total aerosol  
57 extinction ( $r = 0.41$ ). This also indicates that OA estimates are not very sensitive to  
58 HCHO vertical profiles and that a priori profiles from OMI HCHO retrieval are similar to  
59 that from the newer model version in estimating OA. Improving the detection limit of  
60 satellite HCHO and expanding in situ airborne HCHO and OA coverage in future  
61 missions will improve the quality and spatiotemporal coverage of this OA estimate,  
62 potentially enabling constraints on the global OA distribution.

63 **1. Introduction**

64

65 Aerosols are the largest source of uncertainty in climate radiative forcing (IPCC 2013;  
66 Carslaw et al., 2013) and also decrease atmospheric visibility and impact human health  
67 (Pope 2002). Organic aerosols (OA) comprise a large portion (~50%) of submicron  
68 aerosols (Jimenez et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2006; Shrivastava et al., 2017), and this  
69 fraction will grow with continued decline in SO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Attwood et al., 2014; Marais  
70 et al., 2017; Ridley et al., 2018). In addition, OA serve as cloud condensation nuclei  
71 (CCN) and affect cloud formation and climate radiative forcing. Research even found  
72 that the inclusion of phase-separation effects from organic material into cloud droplet  
73 activation thermodynamics in climate models can lead to important changes in CCN  
74 concentrations (Ovadnevaite et al., 2017). OA components also have adverse health  
75 effects (e.g. Walgraeve et al., 2010) and contribute significantly to regional severe haze  
76 events (e.g. Hayes et al., 2013). Finally, because the response of temperature to changes  
77 in climate forcing is non-linear (Taylor and Penner, 1994) and the forcing by aerosols has  
78 strong regional character (Kiehl and Briegleb, 1993), it is necessary to separate out  
79 different climate forcing components to accurately forecast the climate response to  
80 changes in forcing.

81

82 It is challenging to accurately represent OA in global models. Chemical transport models  
83 (CTMs) often under-predict OA (e.g., more than a factor of 2 lower OA near the ground)  
84 compared to observations, and model-to-model variability can exceed a factor of 100 in  
85 the free troposphere (Tsigaridis et al., 2014; Heald et al., 2008; Heald et al., 2011). Fully  
86 explicit mechanisms (e.g. Lee-Taylor et al., 2015) attempt to capture the full OA

87 chemical formation mechanisms, but it is too computationally expensive to apply these  
88 mechanisms to OA formation in global CTMs at a useful resolution. For computational  
89 efficiency, 3-D models such as GEOS-Chem include direct emissions of primary OA  
90 (POA) and either represents secondary OA (SOA) formation by lumping SOA products  
91 according to similar hydrocarbon classes (Kim et al., 2015) or based on the volatility of  
92 the oxidation products (Pye et al., 2010). Marais et al. (2016) applied an aqueous phase  
93 mechanism for SOA formation from isoprene in GEOS-Chem to reasonably simulate  
94 isoprene SOA in the southeast (SE) US. Accurate emission inventories are also needed to  
95 correctly represent volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and NO<sub>x</sub> (NO<sub>x</sub> = NO + NO<sub>2</sub>)  
96 inputs, and these often have biases compared to observational constraints (Kaiser et al.,  
97 2018, Travis et al., 2016, Anderson et al., 2014; McDonald et al., 2018).

98

99 A quantitative measure of OA from space would be very helpful for verifying emissions  
100 and aerosol processes in models. However, direct measurements of OA from space are  
101 currently unavailable. Aerosol optical depth (AOD) measured by satellite sensors  
102 provides a coarse but global picture of total aerosol distributions. Multi-angle Imaging  
103 SpectroRadiometer (MISR) provides aerosol property information such as size, shape and  
104 absorbing properties, which allows retrieving AOD of a subset of aerosols (Kahn and  
105 Gaitley, 2015). Classification algorithms have been developed to speciate different  
106 aerosol types such as OA based on AOD, extinction Angstrom exponent, UV Aerosol  
107 Index, and trace gas columns from satellite instruments (de Vries et al., 2015).

108

109 Formaldehyde (HCHO) is one of the few VOCs that can be directly observed from space.  
110 Sources emitting POA (e.g., biomass burning (BB)) often simultaneously release VOCs.  
111 HCHO and SOA are also both produced from emitted VOCs. VOCs, as well as semi- and  
112 intermediate- volatile organic compounds (S/IVOCs), are oxidized by hydroxyl radicals  
113 (OH) to form peroxy radicals (RO<sub>2</sub>), which then react with NO, RO<sub>2</sub>, hydroperoxy  
114 radicals (HO<sub>2</sub>) or isomerize. These oxidation processes produce HCHO and oxidized  
115 organic compounds with low volatility that condense to form SOA (Robinson et al.,  
116 2007; Ziemann and Atkinson, 2012). The yield of HCHO and SOA from hydrocarbon  
117 oxidation varies, depending on the VOC precursors, oxidants (OH, O<sub>3</sub> and NO<sub>3</sub>), RO<sub>2</sub>  
118 reaction pathway (e.g. NO levels), and pre-existing aerosol abundance and properties  
119 (Wolfe et al., 2016; Pye et al., 2010; Marais et al., 2016 and 2017; Xu et al., 2016).  
120 Although the lifetime of HCHO (1-3 hrs) is shorter than OA (1 week), HCHO continues  
121 to form from slower reacting VOCs, as well as from the oxidation of later generation  
122 products. Observations across megacities around the world show that OA formation in  
123 polluted/urban area happens over about 1 day (e.g. DeCarlo et al., 2010; Hodzic and  
124 Jimenez, 2010; Hayes et al., 2013; 2015), and HCHO is also significantly formed over  
125 this timescale (Nault et al., 2018). Veefkind et al. (2011) found that satellite AOD  
126 correlated with HCHO over the summertime SE US, BB regions, and Southeast Asian  
127 industrialized regions. This also suggests that OA, a major contributor to AOD in the  
128 above cases (Jimenez et al., 2009), and HCHO share common emission sources and  
129 photochemical processes. Marais et al. (2016) further used the relationship between  
130 aircraft OA and satellite HCHO to evaluate GEOS-Chem representation of SOA mass  
131 yields from biogenic isoprene in the SE US.

132

133 We present an OA surface mass concentration estimate (OA estimate) derived from a  
134 combination of satellite HCHO column observations and in situ OA and HCHO  
135 relationships. The detection limit of satellite HCHO column observations limit the quality  
136 of OA estimate, thus we are focusing on summer time when HCHO levels are high. The  
137 OA estimate is evaluated against OA measurements at ground sites. A 3-D model GEOS-  
138 Chem OA simulation is also shown for comparison.

139

## 140 **2. Methods**

### 141 **2.1 In situ airborne observations**

142 Figure 1 shows flight tracks of field campaigns used in the current study. The Studies of  
143 Emissions, Atmospheric Composition, Clouds and Climate Coupling by Regional  
144 Surveys (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS) mission (Toon et al., 2016) covered the continental US with a focus  
145 on the SE US in August-September 2013. The Deep Convective Clouds & Chemistry  
146 Experiment (DC3) (Barth et al., 2015) surveyed the central and SE US in May-June 2012  
147 while targeting isolated deep convective thunderstorms and mesoscale convective  
148 systems. The California Research at the Nexus of Air Quality and Climate Change  
149 (CalNex) (Ryerson et al., 2013) investigated the California region in May-June 2010,  
150 targeting the Los Angeles (LA) Basin and Central Valley. The Korea-United States Air  
151 Quality Study (KORUS-AQ) studied South Korean air quality, including sampling many  
152 large urban areas in South Korea and continental Asian outflow over the West Sea, in  
153 May-June 2016 (<https://www-air.larc.nasa.gov/missions/korus-aq/>). KORUS-AQ only  
154 includes data with longitude < 133° E to exclude the transit from US because it targeted

155 South Korea and the nearby region. These field campaigns were selected as they had  
156 recent high-quality in situ HCHO and OA data measured with state-of-the-art instruments  
157 and studied summertime regional tropospheric chemical composition.

158

159 In situ airborne HCHO observations were acquired by multiple instruments. The DC3  
160 NASA DC-8 payloads featured two HCHO measurements: the NASA In Situ Airborne  
161 Formaldehyde (ISAF) (Cazorla et al., 2015) and the Difference Frequency Generation  
162 Absorption Spectrometer (DFGAS) (Weibring et al., 2006). The SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS NASA DC-8  
163 payloads also featured two HCHO measurements: the NASA ISAF and the Compact  
164 Atmospheric Multispecies Spectrometer (CAMS) (Richter et al., 2015). HCHO  
165 measurements from ISAF were found to be in good agreement with CAMS, with a  
166 correlation coefficient of 0.99 and a slope of 1.10 (Zhu et al., 2016). HCHO  
167 measurements from ISAF also had a good agreement with DFGAS, with a correlation  
168 coefficient of 0.98 and a slope of 1.07. Because ISAF has higher data density, we used  
169 ISAF HCHO data for DC3 and SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. During KORUS-AQ, CAMS was the only  
170 HCHO instrument onboard the DC-8. In CalNex a proton transfer reaction mass  
171 spectrometer (PTRMS) (Warneke et al., 2011) was used to measure HCHO on board the  
172 NOAA P3 aircraft.

173

174 In situ airborne OA from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, DC3, and KORUS-AQ was measured by the  
175 University of Colorado High-Resolution Time-of-Flight Aerosol Mass Spectrometer  
176 (AMS, DeCarlo et al., 2006; Dunlea et al., 2009; Canagaratna et al., 2007; Jimenez et al.,  
177 2016) and in situ airborne OA from CalNex was measured by the NOAA Compact Time-

178 of-Flight Aerosol Mass Spectrometer (Drewnick et al., 2005; Canagaratna et al., 2007;  
179 Bahreini et al., 2012). The OA measurements are from 1 min merge data and converted  
180 from  $\mu\text{g sm}^{-3}$  (at 273 K and 1013 mbar) to  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  under local T & P for each data point.

181

182 Although NO modulates the RO<sub>2</sub> lifetime, and thus, the production of HCHO and SOA, it  
183 cannot be directly observed via remote sensing. Instead, NO<sub>2</sub> can be directly observed in  
184 space by satellites, and since NO<sub>2</sub> represents typically ~80% (e.g. SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and  
185 KORUS-AQ) of the boundary layer NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations during the daytime, it can be  
186 used as a surrogate for daytime NO concentrations and oxidative conditions around the  
187 globe. In situ airborne NO<sub>2</sub> was measured by the NOAA Chemiluminescence NO<sub>y</sub>O<sub>3</sub>  
188 instrument (Ryerson et al., 2001) during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and by University of Berkeley laser  
189 induced fluorescence NO<sub>2</sub> instrument (Day et al., 2002) during KORUS-AQ.

190

## 191 **2.2 Ground-based OA measurements**

192 Ground-based OA measurements over the US are from the EPA Interagency Monitoring  
193 of Protected Visual Environments (IMPROVE) (Malm et al., 1994; Solomon et al., 2014;  
194 Hand et al., 2014; Hand et al., 2013; Malm et al., 2017) and Southeastern Aerosol  
195 Research and Characterization (SEARCH) (Edgerton et al., 2006) networks. In the  
196 IMPROVE network, aerosols were collected on quartz fiber filters and analyzed in the  
197 lab by thermal optical reflectance for organic and elemental carbon. The data were  
198 reported every three days from 1988 to 2014. Monthly averages were used for  
199 comparison in this study. IMPROVE OA data over the SE US (east of 70°W) in  
200 summertime were multiplied by a factor of 1.37 to correct for partial evaporation during

201 filter transport, following the recommendation of a comparison study with SEARCH  
202 organic carbon (OC) measurements (Kim et al., 2015; Hand et al., 2013). Although  
203 IMPROVE OA corrected for evaporation has potential uncertainties with the constant  
204 scaling factor, the IMPROVE measurements have high spatial coverage. SEARCH  
205 network (Edgerton et al., 2006; Hidy et al., 2014) OC is determined by the difference  
206 between total carbon (TC) detected by a tapered element oscillating microbalance  
207 (TEOM) and black carbon (BC) measured by an in situ Thermal Optical instrument. This  
208 allows real-time measurement of OC and prevents evaporation during filter transport.  
209 Although the SEARCH network only has 5 sites available, we also use observations from  
210 this network due to their high accuracy. The IMPROVE and SEARCH network OC  
211 measurements were converted to OA by multiplying by a factor of 2.1 based on ground  
212 and aircraft observations (Pye et al., 2017; Schroder et al., 2018).

213

### 214 **2.3 Satellite measurements**

215 Satellite HCHO column observations are derived from the NASA's Ozone Monitoring  
216 Instrument (OMI), a UV/Vis nadir solar backscatter spectrometer on the Aura satellite  
217 (Levelt et al., 2006). Aura overpasses the equator at 1:30 pm local time, daily. Here we  
218 use the OMI HCHO version 2.0 (collection 3) gridded ( $0.25^\circ \times 0.25^\circ$ ) retrieval data  
219 (Gonzalez Abad et al., 2015) from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO).  
220 Satellite data for HCHO columns were subjected to data quality filters: 1) solar zenith  
221 angle lower than  $70^\circ$ , 2) cloud fraction less than 40%, and 3) main quality flag and the  
222 `xtrackquality` flag both equal to zero  
223 (<https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/atmosphere/Instruments/OMI/PGEReleases/READMEs/O>

224 [MHCHO\\_README\\_v3.0.pdf](#)). The monthly average HCHO columns were also  
225 weighted by the column uncertainties of the pixels. The HCHO retrieval used a priori  
226 profiles without aerosol information from the GEOS-Chem model (Gonzalez Abad et al.,  
227 2015). Satellite NO<sub>2</sub> column observations are also derived from NASA's OMI level 3  
228 data, archived at <https://disc.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov> as "OMI-Aura\_L3-OMNO2d" (Lamsal et  
229 al., 2014).

230 Satellite AOD observations were acquired from the Moderate Resolution Imaging  
231 Spectroradiometer (MODIS) onboard the Aqua satellite, using overpasses at about 1:30  
232 pm local time. Here, we use collection 06 (MYD04\_L2,  
233 <https://ladsweb.nascom.nasa.gov/>), retrieved using the Dark Target (DT) and Deep Blue  
234 (DB) algorithms (Levy et al., 2015).

235

236

## 237 **2.4 GEOS-Chem**

238 We used GEOS-Chem (v9-02) at  $2^\circ \times 2.5^\circ$  with 47 vertical layers to simulate HCHO and  
239 OA globally, the same as that in Marais et al. (2016). GEOS-Chem is driven with  
240 meteorological fields from the NASA Global Modeling and Assimilation Office  
241 (GMAO). The OA simulation includes POA from fires and anthropogenic activity and  
242 SOA from the volatility-based reversible partitioning scheme (VBS) of Pye et al. (2010)  
243 for anthropogenic, fire, and monoterpene sources, and an irreversible aqueous-phase  
244 reactive uptake mechanism for isoprene. The aqueous-phase mechanism is coupled to  
245 gas-phase isoprene chemistry and has been extensively validated using surface and  
246 aircraft observations of isoprene SOA components in the SE US (Marais et al., 2016).

247 This model version uses the fourth-generation global fire emissions database (GFED4)  
248 (Giglio et al., 2013) as BB emission inventory. The model is driven with Goddard Earth  
249 Observing System – Forward Processing (GEOS-FP) meteorology for 2013 and sampled  
250 along the SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS (2013) and KORUS-AQ (2016) flight tracks. The model was also  
251 run with 10% decrease in biomass burning, biogenic, or anthropogenic emissions as  
252 sensitivity test to evaluate the contributions of different sources to OA and HCHO  
253 budget. Model monthly mean surface layer OA and total column formaldehyde are  
254 obtained around the OMI overpass time (12:00-15:00 local time) for 2008-2013 using  
255 MERRA Modern-Era Retrospective analysis for Research and Applications (MERRA)  
256 meteorology, as GEOS-FP is only available from 2012. This is compared to the OA  
257 estimate derived from satellite HCHO.

258

259

260 Global isoprene emissions are used to calculate an isoprene and NO<sub>2</sub> dependent OA  
261 estimate. Global isoprene emissions are from the Model of Emissions of Gases and  
262 Aerosols from Nature version 2.1 (Guenther et al., 2006) as implemented in GEOS-Chem  
263 and driven with MERRA (MEGAN-MERRA).

264

## 265 **2.5 Estimation of surface organic aerosol mass concentrations**

266 An estimate for surface OA mass concentration is calculated based on a simple linear  
267 transformation.

$$268 \quad \varepsilon(i) = \Omega_{HCHO}(i)\eta(i)\alpha(i) + \beta(i) \quad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

269 Here,  $\varepsilon(i)$  is the OA estimate for grid cell  $i$  ( $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ),  $\Omega_{HCHO}(i)$  is the OMI HCHO column  
270 density ( $\text{molec cm}^{-2}$ ) in each  $0.25^\circ \times 0.25^\circ$  grid cell (similar resolution to OMI HCHO  
271 nadir pixel data),  $\eta(i)$  is the ratio of midday surface layer ( $\sim 140$  m) HCHO concentrations  
272 ( $\text{molec cm}^{-3}$ ) to column concentrations ( $\text{molec cm}^{-2}$ ) from GEOS-Chem, and  $\alpha(i)$  and  
273  $\beta(i)$  are the slope and intercept of a linear regression between OA and HCHO from low  
274 altitude ( $< 1$  km) airborne in situ measurements. The in situ to column conversion factor  
275  $\eta(i)$  is similar to that used by Zhu et al. (2017) to convert HCHO columns into surface  
276 concentrations.  $\eta(i)$  is derived from the HCHO a priori profiles used in SAO OMI air  
277 mass factor (AMF) calculations (GEOS-Chem v9-01-03 climatology) or from GEOS-  
278 Chem v9-02, which includes updated isoprene scheme for OA and is the next version of  
279 the model (v9-01-03) for a priori profiles used in SAO satellite HCHO retrievals. HCHO  
280 a priori profiles are used to be consistent with satellite HCHO retrievals and also to show  
281 that OA estimate can be derived without running a global model separately. The newer  
282 version of GEOS-Chem is used to test the sensitivity of OA estimates to updated version  
283 of  $\eta$ . The newer version of GEOS-Chem also allows sampling through the flight tracks of  
284 a recent field campaign (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS) flight tracks and examining the factors impacting  $\eta$   
285 with both modeled and measured HCHO profiles. The detailed information about the  
286 impact of HCHO profiles on  $\eta$  is provided in Sect. 5.

287

## 288 **2.6 Aerosol extinction from satellite measurements**

289 Currently remote sensing observes aerosols by quantifying AOD. The MISR satellite  
290 instrument can estimate a subset of AOD, due to constraints on size range, shape and  
291 absorbing properties, but cannot distinguish OA from other submicron aerosol

292 compounds such as sulfate and nitrate and also requires AOD above 0.1. Because MISR  
293 estimates a subset of AOD, it is discussed here to verify we are not neglecting a satellite  
294 dataset that has already captured OA AOD. Moreover, OA account for a large and  
295 relatively constant fraction of submicron aerosols in the SE US (Kim et al., 2015; Wagner  
296 et al., 2015) and is one of the major submicron aerosol components over the US (Jimenez  
297 et al., 2009). Therefore, AOD was converted to extinction to represent OA for  
298 comparison.

$$299 \quad A_{ext} = AOD(i)\delta(i) \quad \text{Eq. (2)}$$

300 where  $A_{ext}$  is the calculated aerosol extinction ( $Mm^{-1}$ ),  $AOD(i)$  is aerosol optical depth  
301 from MODIS (see Sect. 2.3) in each  $0.25^\circ \times 0.25^\circ$  grid cell, and  $\delta(i)$  ( $m^{-1}$ ) is the ratio of  
302 surface layer OA concentrations ( $\mu g m^{-3}$ ) to column OA concentrations ( $\mu g m^{-2}$ ) from  
303 GEOS-Chem multiplied by  $10^6 Mm^{-1}/m^{-1}$ . The shape of the average vertical profile of  
304 OA was very close to that of total aerosol mass over SE US (Wagner et al., 2015) where  
305 most of the enhanced aerosol concentrations over the US are located. Data with smoke  
306 plumes interferences are excluded in the following analysis. The potential contribution  
307 of dust and nitrate could alter the shape of the vertical profiles and introduce uncertainties  
308 when using OA vertical profiles for other parts of the US. Similar vertical profile shapes  
309 of OA and submicron particles were also observed in a campaign outside the US over  
310 South Korea (Nault et al., 2018). Though OA accounted for  $\sim 40\%$  of the total submicron  
311 particles, the shape of OA and total submicron particles vertical profiles were nearly  
312 identical.

313

### 314 **3. In situ OA and HCHO relationship**

315 Although OA and HCHO share common VOC emission sources and photochemical  
316 processes, their production rates from different emission sources and photochemical  
317 conditions vary, as do their loss rates. The following section discusses the main factors  
318 that modulate OA-HCHO relationships.

319

### 320 **3.1 Regional and Source-Driven Variability**

321 For all regions and/or sources investigated, near-surface in situ OA and HCHO are well  
322 correlated. A scatter plot of in situ OA vs. HCHO at low altitudes (<1 km) from a number  
323 of field campaigns (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, DC3, CalNex, and KORUS-AQ) is displayed in Fig. 2.  
324 The slope, intercept and correlation coefficient are provided in Table 1. SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, DC3,  
325 and CalNex excluded BB data when acetonitrile > 200 pptv (Hudson et al., 2004).  
326 KORUS-AQ used a BB filter with higher acetonitrile (>500 pptv) because the air masses  
327 with moderate acetonitrile enhancement (200-500 pptv) were actually from  
328 anthropogenic emissions. This attribution is based on high levels of acetonitrile detected  
329 downwind of Seoul and west coastal petrochemical facilities, the slope between  
330 acetonitrile and CO being to urban emissions (Warneke et al., 2006), and the  
331 concentrations of anthropogenic tracer CHCl<sub>3</sub> being high (Warneke et al., 2006). Similar  
332 to acetonitrile, another common BB tracer hydrogen cyanide (HCN) was also enhanced  
333 in these air masses. BB data (acetonitrile > 200 pptv) for SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS were analyzed  
334 separately and are inset in Fig. 2. Although all CalNex data had a tight correlation, we  
335 only included the flight data near LA basin to target the area strongly influenced by  
336 anthropogenic emissions. In general, the correlation coefficients between in situ OA and  
337 HCHO were strong ( $r = 0.59 - 0.97$ ) (Table 1).

338  
339 The variety in OA-HCHO regression coefficients among different campaigns reflects the  
340 regional and/or source-driven OA-HCHO variability. Considering only the non-biomass  
341 burning (non-BB) air masses sampled, OA and HCHO had the tightest correlation for  
342 CalNex, because CalNex focused on the LA area (shown in Fig. 2) and Central Valley  
343 while SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and DC3 covered a larger area with a potentially larger variety of  
344 sources and chemical conditions. Although SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and DC3 both sampled the  
345 continental US, SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS had more spatial coverage and sampled more air masses at low  
346 altitudes, while DC3 was designed to sample convective outflow air masses and had more  
347 data at high altitudes. Although KORUS-AQ covered a much smaller area compared to  
348 SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, KORUS-AQ data also had a large spread, which may be due to the  
349 complicated South Korean anthropogenic sources mixed with transported air masses  
350 (mainly from China) and possibly biogenic sources. OA exhibits a tight correlation with  
351 HCHO for both wildfires and agricultural fires during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. This is because the  
352 production of HCHO and OA is much higher in BB air masses compared to background.  
353 This may also suggest that the emissions of OA and HCHO in these air masses are  
354 relatively constant. SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS data are chosen because it sampled fires and had state-of-  
355 the-art, high quality measurements. More intensive fire sampling is needed to probe the  
356 correlation between OA and HCHO across fuel types and environmental conditions.

357

358 The different slopes of OA-HCHO among different campaigns also reflect the regional or  
359 source-driven OA-HCHO variability. The slopes of OA vs. HCHO were more similar  
360 between DC3 and SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. The slope of OA vs. HCHO was higher for South Korea  
361 (KORUS-AQ), which is dominated by anthropogenic emissions compared to the

362 biogenic-dominated emission in the SE US (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and DC3). During KORUS-AQ,  
363 the high OA/HCHO air masses also had high acetonitrile. By the time we sampled, most  
364 organic aerosols were secondary (Nault et al., 2018). This indicates that the formation  
365 rates of OA and HCHO from different emission sources contribute to the different slopes  
366 of OA-HCHO. This also indicates that emission sources with enhanced acetonitrile tend  
367 to form more OA relative to HCHO downwind. The slope of OA-HCHO for California  
368 LA basin, dominated by anthropogenic emissions, was also not as high as South Korea.  
369 The potential difference in the anthropogenic emissions mix could contribute to the  
370 different OA-HCHO slopes from US LA region and South Korea anthropogenic sources  
371 (Baker et al., 2007; Na et al., 2005; Na et al., 2002). The slopes of OA vs. HCHO for BB  
372 air masses were higher than for anthropogenic and biogenic sources. This is consistent  
373 with high POA emission in BB conditions (Heald et al., 2008; Lamarque et al., 2010;  
374 Cubison et al., 2011), with low addition of mass due to SOA formation (Cubison et al.,  
375 2011; Shrivastava et al., 2017). The slope of OA to HCHO was higher for wildfires than  
376 agricultural fires during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. This is consistent with more OA emitted in wildfires  
377 than agricultural fires (Liu et al., 2017). The factors driving higher OA to HCHO with  
378 wildfires are not clear and may be related to burning conditions and fuels. As SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS  
379 had the largest geographic coverage for low altitude data over US, the campaign average  
380 slope of OA vs. HCHO was used to represent the US region in summer, except large  
381 cities where CalNex LA Basin data were used.

382

383

384 **3.2 Dependence on NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs speciation**

385 Biogenic and anthropogenic VOCs are oxidized by atmospheric oxidants (e.g. OH as the  
386 dominant oxidant) to form RO<sub>2</sub>. HCHO is produced from the reactions of RO<sub>2</sub> with HO<sub>2</sub>  
387 or NO, with RO<sub>2</sub>+NO typically producing more HCHO than RO<sub>2</sub> + HO<sub>2</sub> (e.g. Wolfe et  
388 al., 2016). RO<sub>2</sub> can react with HO<sub>2</sub>, NO, or isomerize to form oxidized organic  
389 compounds with high molecular weight and low volatility, which condense on existing  
390 particles to form SOA. The products of RO<sub>2</sub> + NO tend to fragment instead of  
391 functionalize and often lead to higher volatility compounds (e.g. HCHO) and thus less  
392 SOA formation compared to the products of RO<sub>2</sub> + HO<sub>2</sub> (Kroll et al., 2006; Worton et al.,  
393 2013). Therefore, with the same VOC, we expect more HCHO and less OA formed at  
394 high NO conditions and vice versa. As mentioned before, NO<sub>2</sub> instead of NO is easily  
395 measured from space and NO<sub>2</sub> typically is ~80% of NO<sub>x</sub> in the boundary layer during the  
396 day. Therefore, NO<sub>2</sub> is used as a surrogate for the NO levels influencing OA and HCHO  
397 production. The yields of HCHO and SOA also depend on VOC speciation (e.g. Lee et  
398 al., 2006). Specifically, isoprene has a higher yield of HCHO than most non-alkene  
399 VOCs (Dufour et al., 2009).

400

401 A scatter plot of OA vs. HCHO for SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS low altitude data is shown in Fig. 3(a). The  
402 data are color-coded by the product of in-situ isoprene and NO<sub>2</sub>, attempting to capture  
403 time periods strongly influenced by oxidation products of isoprene at high NO  
404 conditions. No obvious trends are evident when the data are instead color coded by NO<sub>2</sub>  
405 or isoprene only. This may be because isoprene (biogenic source) and NO<sub>2</sub>  
406 (anthropogenic sources) are generally not co-located in the US (Yu et al., 2016) and  
407 isoprene is the dominant source of HCHO compared to anthropogenic VOCs in the US

408 (e.g. Millet et al., 2008). This plot shows that, at high NO<sub>2</sub> and high isoprene conditions,  
409 less OA was formed for each HCHO produced generally. The correlation coefficient of  
410 0.45 for high NO<sub>2</sub> and isoprene conditions during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS is not very high but still  
411 shows significant dependence of the OA-HCHO relationship on the product of NO<sub>2</sub> and  
412 isoprene, considering that these are ambient data and other factors (e.g. different specific  
413 sources) also play a role in determining OA-HCHO relationships. This is consistent with  
414 high NO and isoprene conditions promote HCHO formation over SOA formation. We  
415 also looked at the dependence on peroxy acetyl nitrate (PAN), as PAN is a product of the  
416 photo oxidation of VOCs, including isoprene, in the presence of NO<sub>2</sub>. The dependence on  
417 PAN was not as clear as on the product of NO<sub>2</sub> and isoprene.

418

419 KORUS-AQ OA vs. HCHO, color-coded with NO<sub>2</sub>, is plotted in Fig. 3(b). The OA /  
420 HCHO ratio clearly decreased as NO<sub>2</sub> levels increased during KORUS-AQ, suggesting  
421 that high NO conditions accelerated HCHO formation more than they did SOA  
422 production. OA-HCHO relationships do not have dependence on local time of the day  
423 (not shown). This further confirms that NO<sub>x</sub> is an important factor that affects the  
424 OA/HCHO relationship. Compared to SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, the KORUS-AQ OA/HCHO ratio does  
425 not depend on VOCs. This may be consistent with the dominant VOC being  
426 anthropogenic VOCs that are co-located with NO sources. This may also suggest the  
427 anthropogenic VOCs generally have a lower HCHO yield than does isoprene. Because  
428 OA and HCHO were tightly correlated during CalNex and DC3, we did not parse for  
429 NO<sub>x</sub>. The NO<sub>x</sub> range during DC3 low altitude data was smaller than KORUS-AQ and  
430 SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. DC3 OA and HCHO relationships only had a slight dependence on NO<sub>2</sub> (not

431 shown here), largely due to the limited dataset. The  $\text{NO}_x$  range during CalNex low  
432 altitude data was large. The tight OA and HCHO correlation during CalNex could be due  
433 to the combination of different VOCs sources and  $\text{NO}_x$  levels.

434

435

#### 436 **4. Comparison of OA and HCHO relationship: in-situ vs. GEOS-Chem**

437 In situ OA vs. HCHO relationships from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS low altitude non-BB (Fig. 4a),  
438 KORUS-AQ low altitude (Fig. 4b), and SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS BB (Fig. 4c) air masses were  
439 compared to GEOS-Chem model simulations (Fig. 4d-4f) sampling along the  
440 corresponding flight tracks. Similar to the in situ data, GEOS-Chem model simulations  
441 also found correlations between OA and HCHO for these three regions, especially for  
442 SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS non-BB. GEOS-Chem was intensively validated with in situ measurements for  
443 SE US (e.g. Marais et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015). The ratios of the slopes between OA  
444 and HCHO for the US (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS), South Korea (KORUS-AQ), and wildfire cases  
445 (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS) from GEOS-Chem were 1:1.1:0.4, which was different from the in situ  
446 measurements ratios of 1:1.4:13 (Table 1). GEOS-Chem could not capture any wild fires  
447 in US during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS, which is probably due to poor representation of BB emission  
448 inventory for US wildfire and also the coarse grid in GEOS-Chem. GEOS-Chem also  
449 significantly under predicted the slope of OA to HCHO for South Korea. We attribute  
450 this to a likely underprediction of anthropogenic SOA, which was dominant in South  
451 Korea, in GEOS-Chem (Schroder et al., 2018), as well as a different mix of OA and  
452 HCHO sources in the US compared to South Korea and representation of these in GEOS-  
453 Chem. Although GEOS-Chem contains isoprene chemistry with a focus on the SE US

454 (Marais et al. 2016), there is still room to improve the model especially for anthropogenic  
455 and BB sources, as well as anthropogenic OA formation mechanisms. For example, in the  
456 model biogenic sources are more important than anthropogenic sources for the OA and  
457 HCHO budgets in South Korea, which is not the case from KORUS-AQ in situ  
458 measurements. In the model, a 10% decrease of emissions from biogenic, anthropogenic  
459 and BB sources results in a 6%, 3%, and 1% decrease in OA and 2%, 1%, and 0%  
460 decrease in HCHO over South Korea in May 2016. However, the in situ airborne field  
461 campaign KORUS-AQ found that OA and HCHO were higher near anthropogenic  
462 emission sources compared to rural regions. The larger impact of biogenic sources  
463 compared to anthropogenic sources on OA and HCHO in the model can be due to both  
464 low-biased anthropogenic emission inventories and low-biased anthropogenic SOA.  
465 Improving anthropogenic emissions inventories in the models can also bring model  
466 results closer to observations. Improving anthropogenic SOA, such as implementation of  
467 the SIMPLE model, in GEOS-Chem (Hodzic and Jimenez, 2011) can also improve the  
468 model results compared to observations. Measurements or measurement-constrained  
469 estimation with sufficient spatial and temporal coverage can help to narrow down the key  
470 factors (e.g. emission inventories or chemical schemes) in GEOS-Chem to better  
471 represent VOCs and OA globally. Furthermore, we did also find that GEOS-Chem could  
472 not capture the observed higher slope of OA to HCHO at high altitudes (not shown),  
473 which could be due to issues such as transport, OA lifetime, and OA production.

474

475

476

477 **5. Relating satellite HCHO column to surface HCHO concentrations**

478 To utilize the derived in-situ OA and HCHO relationship, the satellite HCHO column  
479 needs to be converted to surface HCHO concentrations. We used a vertical distribution  
480 factor  $\eta$  ( $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) (Sect. 2.5), which is defined as the ratio of surface HCHO concentrations  
481 ( $\text{molec cm}^{-3}$ ) to HCHO column ( $\text{molec cm}^{-2}$ ), to estimate surface HCHO concentrations  
482 from satellite column measurements. Zhu et al. (2017) used the same vertical distribution  
483 factor for their study. The use of this factor is justified by the fact that the derived surface  
484 HCHO retained the spatial pattern of the satellite HCHO column and agreed with local  
485 surface measurements of HCHO for a multi-year average (Zhu et al., 2017).

486

487 We also investigated the main factors affecting the variation of the vertical distribution  
488 factor  $\eta$ . Because the factor is determined by HCHO vertical distributions, we examined  
489 three typical normalized HCHO vertical distribution profiles with the highest, median and  
490 lowest  $\eta$  values for the SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS field campaign (Fig. 5). Because the sensitivity of OA  
491 estimates to  $\eta$  is investigated with  $\eta$  from different GEOS-Chem versions (Sect. 6.2), we  
492 don't compare HCHO vertical profiles from model and measurements for a  
493 comprehensive set of field campaigns. We chose SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS to illustrate the main factors  
494 impacting the  $\eta$  over US because SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS has a larger spatial coverage than DC3 and  
495 CalNex. GEOS-Chem can generally capture the vertical profiles of measured HCHO.  
496 Boundary layer mixing height and surface emission strength are the dominant factors in  
497 determining the fraction of HCHO near the surface. We can see that higher boundary  
498 layer mixing height results in lower  $\eta$  for SE US profiles, where there are biogenic  
499 sources of HCHO from the surface and HCHO has distinct concentration difference

500 below and above the boundary layer. However, there are exceptions, such as for the  
501 profiles over the ocean and the coastal regions. Although the boundary layer is shallow in  
502 these regions, a large portion of HCHO resides above the boundary layer, resulting in  
503 low  $\eta$ . In these cases, surface emissions of HCHO or precursors are very small and  
504 therefore methane oxidation makes a large contribution to the total HCHO column. High  
505 concentrations of HCHO (e.g., in BB plumes) lofted by convection can also impact the  
506 vertical profile (Barth et al., 2015), which is not further investigated because OA  
507 estimates with BB influences over US are excluded in current study. Overall, the source  
508 intensities and boundary layer mixing height mostly determined the HCHO vertical  
509 profiles.

510

## 511 **6. Construction of the OA estimate**

### 512 **6.1 Variables to construct OA estimate**

513 As mentioned in Sect. 2.5, the OA estimate value in each grid cell is estimated from  
514 monthly average satellite HCHO column observation by the linear Eq. (1). Satellite  
515 monthly average HCHO column data,  $\Omega_{HCHO}$ , are converted to surface HCHO  
516 concentrations by multiplying by the  $\eta(i)$  factor either from climatology a priori profiles  
517 or monthly average HCHO profiles. Surface OA is then estimated by the derived surface  
518 HCHO concentrations and applying the linear regression equation (slope  $\alpha(i)$  and  
519 intercept  $\beta(i)$ ) between in situ OA and HCHO determined from in-situ aircraft field  
520 campaign data. The relationship between OA and HCHO varies but previous sections  
521 demonstrated that we can quantify the surface OA-HCHO relationship by their regions,  
522 sources and chemical conditions (e.g.,  $\text{NO}_x$  levels). To test the impact of the chosen OA-

523 HCHO relationship on the calculated OA estimate, the OA estimate in the US was  
524 calculated using four different methods (see Table 2).

525

## 526 **6.2 OA estimate over US**

527 The monthly average surface OA estimate over the US in August 2013 for case 1 (see  
528 Table 2) with different  $\eta$  is shown in Fig. 6a and 6b. Because BB regions in the US are  
529 not covered by smoke continuously during a period of time and it is challenging for  
530 satellite retrieval to separate thick BB plumes and clouds without information on the time  
531 and location of the burning, thick BB events (OMI UV Aerosol Index (UVAI)  $> 1.6$ )  
532 (Torres et al., 2007) were excluded and shown as the blank (white) grid cells in Fig. 6a  
533 and 6b. The same filter was also applied to aerosol extinction and GEOS-Chem OA  
534 abundance. To evaluate the representative quality of the OA estimate, OA estimate data  
535 were compared to the EPA IMPROVE ground sites corrected-OA measurements over the  
536 US and SEARCH ground sites OA measurements in the SE US (Sect. 2.2). The locations  
537 of IMPROVE and SEARCH sites are displayed in Fig. 6e as small and large dots,  
538 respectively. The dot color represents the average OA mass concentrations for August  
539 2013.

540

541 Considering the uncertainties in satellite HCHO measurements, in using the campaign  
542 lump-sum OA-HCHO relationship to represent spatial resolved OA, in HCHO vertical  
543 profiles, and in ground IMPROVE network measurements, the correlation (correlation  
544 coefficient  $r = 0.56$ ) between the OA estimate and corrected IMPROVE network  
545 measurements (Fig. 6f and 6g) is reasonably good and indicates that the OA estimate can

546 generally capture the variation of OA loading over the US. The correlation coefficient  
547 between HCHO SAO retrievals and in situ measurements during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS was not  
548 high ( $r = 0.24$ ) but this may be partly because they were not sampled at the same time.  
549 The uncertainty in HCHO SAO data was likely less than 76%. The uncertainty in  
550 applying a campaign lump-sum OA-HCHO relationship to individual spatial resolved  
551 satellite HCHO data to estimate OA induced an uncertainty of 41% according to the  
552 correlation coefficient of OA-HCHO in the field campaign.  $\eta$  in the Fig. 6a OA estimate  
553 is from GEOS-Chem v9-02 output for the specific month August, 2013.  $\eta$  in the Fig. 6b  
554 OA estimate is from GEOS-Chem v9-01-03 climatology, the same as satellite data a  
555 priori profiles. The good correlations of OA estimates with IMPROVE OA indicate that  
556 OA estimates are not very sensitive to  $\eta$  from different model versions. The largest  
557 difference between the two OA estimates is their concentrations over East Texas. There  
558 are no IMPROVE OA measurements in the East Texas to evaluate which works better.  
559 The uncertainties in IMPROVE OA measurements, such as using a constant correction  
560 factor to correct the partial evaporation across all SE US sites, and the spatially  
561 dependent OA/OC ratio (Tsigaridis et al., 2014), may also have contributed to the  
562 discrepancies between the OA estimate and EPA IMPROVE sites OA. Therefore, higher  
563 quality of satellite HCHO data and refining OA-HCHO relationships will help improve  
564 our OA estimate products. This combined with a spatially resolved IMPROVE OA  
565 correction factor and OA/OC ratios will help improve the correlation coefficients  
566 between OA estimates and IMPROVE OA.  
567

568 The linear correlation between the OA estimate and IMPROVE OA measurements  
569 yielded a slope of 0.62 or 0.60, indicating that the OA estimate slightly underestimated  
570 OA. Satellite HCHO data were measured in mid-day, in situ airborne OA and HCHO  
571 were measured during the daytime and IMPROVE network organic carbon was collected  
572 day and night. Because ground OA in the SE US were observed to have little diurnal  
573 variation (Xu et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2015), the different sampling time of ground and  
574 airborne OA probably does not have a significant impact on the comparison of OA  
575 estimate and IMPROVE OA. Surface HCHO has evident diurnal profiles with the highest  
576 concentrations around the mid-day (Kaiser et al., 2016), which could add uncertainties to  
577 OA estimate when using inconsistent time ranges of satellite HCHO data measured in the  
578 mid-day and in situ airborne OA and HCHO relationships measured in the daytime. The  
579 SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS HCHO concentrations were converted to 1:30 pm concentrations according to  
580 the average HCHO diurnal profile from the Southern Oxidant and Aerosol Study (SOAS)  
581 (Kaiser et al., 2016). The OA-HCHO relationship with HCHO converted to 1:30 pm  
582 yielded a slope of 5% lower than the original OA-HCHO relationship. The potential  
583 uncertainty ( $\pm 30\%$ ) in OA/OC ratio could also contribute to the systematic difference  
584 because we used OA/OC of 2.1 and studies (e.g. Pye et al., 2017; Canagaratna et al.,  
585 2015) showed that the OA/OC can range from 1.4 to 2.8. The potential underestimation  
586 of HCHO from satellite retrieval (by  $-37\%$ ) (Zhu et al., 2016) compared to SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS  
587 may be one of the most important reasons that cause the systematic difference (low slope)  
588 between the OA estimate and IMPROVE OA according to Eq. (1). Satellite HCHO data  
589 corrected by the low bias (by  $-37\%$ ) (Zhu et al., 2016) will increase our slopes of 0.60-  
590 0.62 to be close to the unity.

591

592 SEARCH OA data were also used to compare to the OA estimate. The correlation was  
593 good for August 2013. Although the SEARCH network OA measurements have better  
594 accuracy, the number of SEARCH sites is limited (5 sites). The correlation of OA  
595 estimate and SEARCH OA varied dramatically 2008-2013 (Fig. S1). GEOS-Chem OA  
596 does not correlate with SEARCH OA except for the year 2013 (Fig. S1). As the  
597 IMPROVE network has more sites and spatial coverage, we use IMPROVE network data  
598 as ground OA measurements for comparison in the remainder of the discussion.

599

### 600 **6.3 Comparison to aerosol extinction from AOD**

601 To further evaluate the method of using satellite HCHO to derive an OA surface estimate,  
602 satellite aerosol measurements are used to approximate surface OA extinction for  
603 comparison. Satellite measurements of AOD were converted to surface extinction for the  
604 regions AOD is dominated by OA (see Sec. 2.6). Studies showed that OA were a  
605 dominant component of aerosol mass and extinction during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS (Kim et al., 2015;  
606 Wagner et al., 2015) and the fractions of OA were relatively constant (interdecile 62-  
607 74%) (Wagner et al., 2015). Therefore AOD variation is expected to generally reflect the  
608 OA variation during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS. Satellite measurements from MISR can provide more  
609 aerosol property information to apportion total AOD to AOD of a subset of aerosols with  
610 small to medium size and round shape, which can better capture OA, when AOD is above  
611 0.15 to 0.2 (Kahn and Gaitley, 2015; personal communication with R. Kahn, 2018).  
612 Because MISR cannot distinguish OA and other submicron aerosol components (e.g.  
613 sulfate and nitrate) and would cut off low AOD data which accounted for near half of the

614 data over US, we use total AOD to derive extinction for our comparison. The AOD-  
615 derived extinction map is shown in Fig. 6(c), and the scatter plot of AOD-derived  
616 extinction and EPA corrected OA is displayed in Fig. 6(h). The same filter of high AI  
617 was also applied to AOD-derived extinction to remove BB plumes. Generally, the  
618 derived aerosol extinction had a correlation with IMPROVE OA, but the correlation is  
619 not as good as for the OA estimate with IMPROVE OA. The high surface aerosol  
620 extinctions ( $> 150 \text{ Mm}^{-1}$ ) (outliers in the scatter plot) are located in the SE US and  
621 therefore are not due to potential contribution of dust and nitrate altering the shape of  
622 vertical profiles outside of the SE US. This indicates that the OA estimate derived from  
623 HCHO may be better than AOD at representing the concentrations of OA, even for the  
624 regions where AOD is dominated by OA (Xu et al., 2015).

625

#### 626 **6.4 Comparison to GEOS-Chem OA**

627 Surface OA over the US from a GEOS-Chem simulation for August 2013 is shown in  
628 Fig. 6(d), and the scatter plot of GEOS-Chem OA with IMPROVE OA is in Fig. 6(i). The  
629 GEOS-Chem simulation had a coarser resolution than satellite HCHO data. To be  
630 comparable to the OA estimate, the scatter plot Fig. 6(i) used GEOS-Chem results for the  
631 grid squares that overlap with individual IMPROVE sites. Compared to the OA estimate,  
632 GEOS-Chem OA had a similar correlation coefficient with IMPROVE OA. Although the  
633 GEOS-Chem OA plot appears more scattered, there are many GEOS-Chem data points  
634 close to zero when IMPROVE OA was low, making the overall correlation coefficient  
635 similar to that for the OA estimate. GEOS-Chem under predicted IMPROVE OA more

636 with a slope of 0.57 compared to the OA estimate. This is consistent with underprediction  
637 of anthropogenic OA in Marais et al. (2016).

638

### 639 **6.5 OA estimate with different OA-HCHO relationships**

640 In general, OA estimate results from the four cases were similar. The OA estimates from  
641 the four cases (Table 2) were compared to IMPROVE OA and the correlation coefficients  
642 are shown in Fig. 7. The details about how to implement chemical factors dependent OA  
643 estimates for the four cases are also provided in Table 2. Satellite OMI NO<sub>2</sub> data (at 1 :  
644 30 pm) are used to represent NO<sub>x</sub> levels, big cities are defined as NO<sub>2</sub> > 4 × 10<sup>15</sup> molec  
645 cm<sup>-2</sup> and the CalNex in situ OA-HCHO relationship is applied for big cities. It turns out  
646 that only 1 IMPROVE site (San Gabriel, SAGA1) near LA was affected by high NO<sub>2</sub> and  
647 led to the insignificant change in case 3 compared to case 1. This is not unexpected  
648 because IMPROVE sites are in rural regions. The OA estimate in SAGA1 decreased from  
649 1.88 μg m<sup>-3</sup> from case 1 to 0.17 μg m<sup>-3</sup> in case 3 while the measured OA in IMPROVE  
650 SAGA1 was 1.52 μg m<sup>-3</sup>. This may infer that CalNex is not very consistent with  
651 SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS due to different sampling instruments, strategies and seasons. Lowering the NO<sub>2</sub>  
652 threshold when defining big cities did not help improve the agreement either. Including  
653 the NO<sub>2</sub>-isoprene-dependent OA and HCHO relationship (case 2) showed a similar (or  
654 slightly worse) correlation between the OA estimate and IMPROVE OA. As the in situ  
655 data showed a moderate NO<sub>2</sub>-isoprene-dependent OA and HCHO relationship, we  
656 attributed this to the uncertainty of isoprene emissions from MEGAN, the locations of  
657 IMPROVE site at rural regions, the uncertainty in IMPROVE network measurements, or  
658 other factors (e.g. sources-dependent OA-HCHO) besides NO<sub>2</sub>-isoprene that also need to

659 be taken into account when determining the specific OA-HCHO relationship. Because  
660 separating large urban areas and other regions and applying a simple chemical regime  
661 dependent in situ OA and HCHO relationship did not improve the agreement between the  
662 OA estimate and IMPROVE OA, we used the base case OA and HCHO relationship  
663 (case 1) to derive the OA estimate (shown in Fig. 6). SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and DC3 only had a few  
664 low altitude data in the Midwest and did not cover the Northeast US. The measured OA-  
665 HCHO relationship in the Midwest did not show significant difference from the SE US.  
666 The scatter plots (Fig. 6f and 6g) of OA estimates and IMPROVE OA do not show  
667 outliers for the Northeast and Midwest. This indicates that using the SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS lump  
668 sum OA-HCHO relationship can reasonably capture regions outside of the SE US.

669

670

## 671 **6.6 Temporal variation of the agreement between OA estimate and IMPROVE OA**

672 Besides August 2013 (see Fig. 6), the correlations between the OA estimate and  
673 IMPROVE OA for the summer months June-July-August 2008-2013 were also examined  
674 and shown in Fig. 7. Generally, the correlation coefficients between the OA estimate and  
675 IMPROVE OA were  $>0.5$  for summer months of the years investigated. The correlation  
676 coefficients were generally higher in June compared to July and August. The lower  
677 average temperature in June might be related to the higher correlation coefficients.  
678 IMPROVE network aerosol samples were transported at ambient temperature in a truck  
679 and more organic vapors likely evaporated at higher temperature. The different  
680 temperatures and distances from IMPROVE sites to the laboratory may lead to  
681 inhomogeneous evaporation among the samples and result in lower correlation

682 coefficients. Although higher temperatures in July and August may also lead to more BB,  
683 average aerosol index over the US was not higher in July (mean: 0.35) and August  
684 (mean: 0.36) compared to June (mean: 0.39) for these years. The underlying cause for the  
685 lowest correlation coefficients in July and August 2012 is not clear and may be related  
686 the severe drought in 2012 (Seco et al., 2015). The correlation coefficients were also low  
687 for the linear regressions (not shown) of IMPROVE OA with both GEOS-Chem OA and  
688 AOD-derived extinction. Because the lowest correlation coefficients were consistently  
689 observed for multiple OA-related products and not just the OA estimate, we attributed  
690 this to uncertainties in the IMPROVE OA measurements or some unknown bias shared  
691 by the satellite HCHO, GEOS-Chem OA, and satellite AOD.

692  
693

#### 694 **6.7 South Korea OA estimate**

695 We attempted to estimate an OA estimate for South Korea, using airborne in situ  
696 measurements of OA and HCHO from the KORUS-AQ field campaign ([https://www-  
697 air.larc.nasa.gov/missions/korus-aq/](https://www-air.larc.nasa.gov/missions/korus-aq/)) and SAO OMI HCHO measurements. The National  
698 Institute of Environmental Research (NIER) ground sites OC measurements during  
699 KORUS-AQ over South Korea could be used to validate the OA estimate. However,  
700 OMI HCHO measurements were below the detection limit (Zhu et al., 2016) in May  
701 2016. Also, there were no OMI data available in June 2016 when airborne measurements  
702 and ground sites OC measurements were available during KORUS-AQ. Because an OA  
703 estimate for South Korea could not be well retrieved and validated, it was not presented  
704 in this study. Although an OA estimate for South Korea could not be retrieved in the  
705 current study, the consistency in the dependence of OA-HCHO relationships on chemical

706 factors (e.g. emission sources, NO<sub>x</sub>, and altitudes) provides important information for  
707 potential application of chemical factors dependent OA-HCHO relationships to the  
708 geographical domain beyond the continental US, especially with improved satellite  
709 HCHO data from Tropospheric Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI).

710

## 711 **7 Limitations of the OA estimate and future work**

712 Because the OA estimate is based on satellite HCHO data, the detection limit of satellite  
713 HCHO data affects the quality of the OA estimate. Currently, due to the limited  
714 sensitivity of OMI for HCHO, the OA estimate is valid only when high levels of HCHO  
715 are present, such as during summer time and near large HCHO sources. With the new  
716 TROPOMI satellite instrument and future missions TEMPO and GEMS, satellite HCHO  
717 measurements will have higher spatial and temporal resolutions and lower detection  
718 limits. These higher quality satellite HCHO measurements will improve our OA estimate  
719 quality and also its spatial and temporal coverage.

720

721 Because the OA estimate uses the relationship of in situ HCHO and OA measurements,  
722 the coverage of in situ aircraft field campaigns will impact the OA estimate quality.  
723 Currently, in situ airborne measurements of OA and HCHO focus on the continental US.  
724 Extending measurements to regions such as Africa BB, South America, and East Asia,  
725 where HCHO and OA have high concentrations, will increase the spatial coverage of the  
726 OA estimate product. Ground site measurements of OA with consistent quality control in  
727 those regions will also be important for validating the OA estimate.

728

729 Improvement of satellite HCHO retrieval during the BB cases will also improve OA  
730 estimate quality. BB cases with high UV aerosol index over the US were excluded in the  
731 current OA estimate analysis. With improvement in the satellite retrieval of HCHO, we  
732 may be able to estimate OA during BB cases over the US. Upcoming field campaigns  
733 such as the Fire Influence on Regional and Global Environments Experiment – Air  
734 Quality (FIREX-AQ) will provide opportunities to improve the analysis of OA estimate  
735 in BB cases in the US.

736

737 This OA estimate method has limitations in remote regions far away from HCHO  
738 sources. Because the lifetimes of HCHO (1-3 hours) and OA (1 week) are different, the  
739 slopes and intercepts between HCHO and OA are expected to change when air masses  
740 are aged (e.g. in remote regions). HCHO is close to being in steady-state with production  
741 rates roughly equal to loss rates while OA is not in steady-state with a lifetime of a week.  
742 Therefore, OA can be accumulated relative to HCHO when air masses are aged. OA vs.  
743 HCHO from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS and KORUS-AQ field campaigns, color-coded with altitude as an  
744 indicator of air mass age, are plotted in Fig. S2 (a) and (b), respectively. A relative  
745 depletion of HCHO at high altitudes was observed due to its shorter lifetime. This also  
746 suggests that, at remote regions far away from the sources, the ratios of OA and HCHO  
747 could be much higher and the relationship between OA and HCHO derived near the  
748 sources may no longer apply. On the other hand, the lifetime of 1-3 hrs for HCHO does  
749 not imply that the OA estimate only work within this timescale. HCHO is formed from  
750 oxidation of transported gas phase VOCs, including the oxidation products of the primary  
751 emitted VOCs, as well as of the slower reacting VOCs (e.g. Ethane and Benzene). Most

752 gas-to-particle oxidation processes that might produce HCHO can last up to 1-2 days  
753 (Palm et al., 2018). Fig. S3 shows the ratios of OA and HCHO did not change  
754 significantly downwind for the Rim Fire plume for about 1 day of aging, which was  
755 determined by the distance from the source and the wind speed. A lower photolysis rate  
756 of HCHO in the plume can also contribute to this. However, we do not expect that the  
757 relationship of OA and HCHO remains past 1-2 boundary layer ventilation cycles (Palm  
758 et al., 2018). Although OA-HCHO relationships depend on air mass age, it does not  
759 largely affect our study for monthly average surface OA over continental US because our  
760 OA estimates showed reasonably good agreement with ground sites IMPROVE OA  
761 measurements. This also indicates that SOA are enhanced near the source regions  
762 statistically. Nault et al. (2018) also showed the production of HCHO and SOA are  
763 similar and plateau around 0.5 – 1 photochemical day. So, in the near field of emissions  
764 and chemistry, the productions of these two species are similar; however, outside of near  
765 field of emissions and rapid chemistry, the long lifetime of OA vs the steady state of  
766 HCHO would start controlling the slopes and correlations.

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## 769 **8 Summary**

770 We have developed a satellite-based estimate of the surface OA concentration (“OA  
771 estimate”) based on in situ observations. This estimate is based on the empirical  
772 relationships of in-situ OA and HCHO for several regions. OA and HCHO share VOC  
773 sources with different yields and lifetimes. Using surface OA and HCHO linear  
774 regression slopes and intercepts can relate surface HCHO to OA. To estimate the surface

775 HCHO concentration from satellite HCHO column, we used a vertical distribution factor  
776  $\eta$  from either climatology satellite data a priori profiles or updated model run for specific  
777 period, which is largely determined by boundary layer height and surface emissions and  
778 found to reasonably retrieve surface HCHO from column HCHO.

779

780 The OA estimate over the continental US generally correlated well with EPA IMPROVE  
781 network OA measurements corrected for partial evaporation. The good correlations are  
782 not only for the time during SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS but also for most summer months over several  
783 years (2008-2013) investigated. Compared to aerosol extinction derived from AOD, the  
784 OA estimate had slightly higher correlation coefficients with IMPROVE OA. GEOS-  
785 Chem can predict OA with a similar correlation coefficient with IMPROVE OA  
786 compared to the OA estimate when GEOS-Chem was intensively validated with in situ  
787 measurements for SE US. Better satellite HCHO data from TROPOMI and future  
788 TEMPO and GEMS and extending spatiotemporal coverage of in situ measurements will  
789 improve the quality and coverage of the OA estimate.

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1354 Tables

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1356 Table 1. Linear regression parameters for OA vs. HCHO at low altitudes (<1 km)

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	US (SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS)	US (DC3)	US (CalNex)	South Korea (KORUS- AQ)	Wild Fires (SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS)	Agricultural Fires (SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS)	SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS Low NO <sub>2</sub> and Isoprene	SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS high NO <sub>2</sub> and Isoprene
<b>In situ measurements OA v.s. HCHO</b>								
Slope <sup>a</sup>	1.93±0.07	1.30±0.10	1.34±0.02	2.75±0.05	25.08±0.30	3.22±0.37	2.39±0.09	1.45±0.19
Slope <sup>b</sup> (×10 <sup>-11</sup> )	9.61±0.34	6.49±0.49	6.66±0.09	13.71±0.25	125.05±1.49	16.04±1.85	11.9±0.43	7.25±0.96
Intercept <sup>c</sup>	0.34±0.32	1.10±0.30	-0.90±0.06	1.36±0.22	-6.85±2.80	10.41±5.82	-1.14±0.37	1.14±1.22
Correlation coefficient r	0.59	0.76	0.88	0.70	0.97	0.85	0.64	0.45
<b>GEOS- Chem model sampled along the flight track OA v.s. HCHO</b>								
Slope <sup>a</sup>	1.25±0.03			1.39±0.05	0.48±0.05			
Slope (×10 <sup>-11</sup> )	6.21±0.14			6.95±0.23	2.37±0.22			
Intercept	-1.32±0.11			1.88±0.07	0.12±0.03			
Correlation Coefficient r	0.76			0.43	0.53			

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<sup>a</sup> The unit of the slope is g g<sup>-1</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> The unit of the slope is pg molec<sup>-1</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> The unit of the intercept is µg m<sup>-3</sup>.

The uncertainties are one standard deviation.

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Table 2. Methods to estimate OA surface concentrations, based on the choice of slope and intercept from a linear regression relationship between OA and HCHO data found in Table 1.

1 <sup>a</sup>	Using non-BB SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS relationship to represent all continental US
2 <sup>b</sup>	Using NO <sub>2</sub> and isoprene dependent non-BB SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS relationship for all continental US
3	Using the CalNex LA Basin relationship for large urban cites and the non-biomass burning SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS relationship for other US regions
4 <sup>b</sup>	Using the CalNex LA Basin relationship for large urban cites and the NO <sub>2</sub> and isoprene dependent non-BB SEAC <sup>4</sup> RS relationship for other US regions

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<sup>a</sup>SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS was chosen to represent all continental US because it had the largest horizontal and vertical coverage.

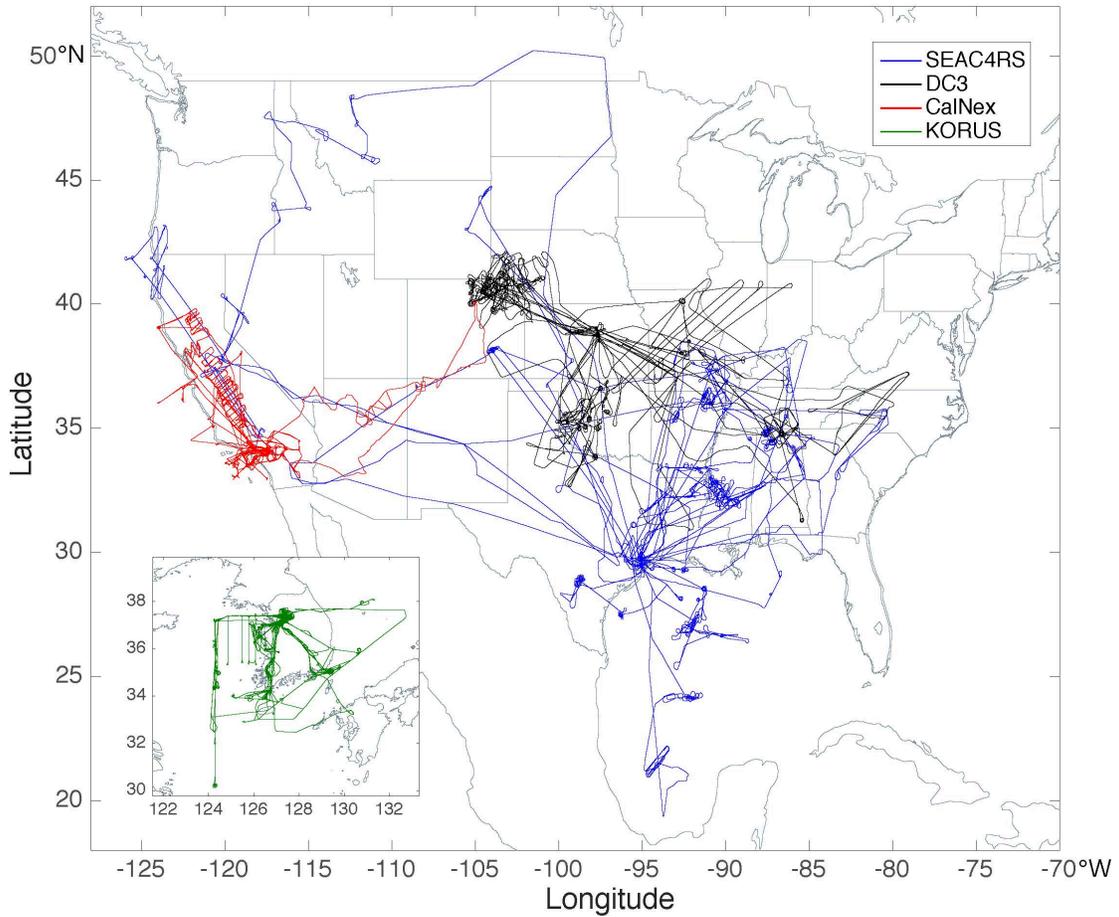
<sup>b</sup> In methods 2 and 4, when the product of NO<sub>2</sub> column (Sect. 2.3) and surface isoprene emission rate (Sect. 2.4) was above threshold of 5×10<sup>27</sup> molec cm<sup>-2</sup> atom C cm<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>, the slope and intercept from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS high isoprene and NO<sub>2</sub> conditions were used. When the NO<sub>2</sub> column–isoprene emission product was below that threshold, the slope and intercept from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS low isoprene and NO<sub>2</sub> conditions were used. Threshold of “Isoprene × NO<sub>2</sub>” is determined by its mean value over SE US (83° - 96° W and 32° - 35°N). Large urban cities are categorized with high NO<sub>2</sub> vertical columns (>4 ×10<sup>15</sup> molec cm<sup>-2</sup>) (Tong et al., 2015) based on the satellite NO<sub>2</sub> levels over LA. Isoprene emissions

1376 instead of concentrations are used because global models use isoprene emission inventory to simulate isoprene  
1377 concentrations and isoprene emission inventory is easier to access. Since isoprene has a short-lifetime of up to a few  
1378 hours (Guenther et al., 2006), the emissions have a similar spatiotemporal distribution as the concentrations.  
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1381 Figures

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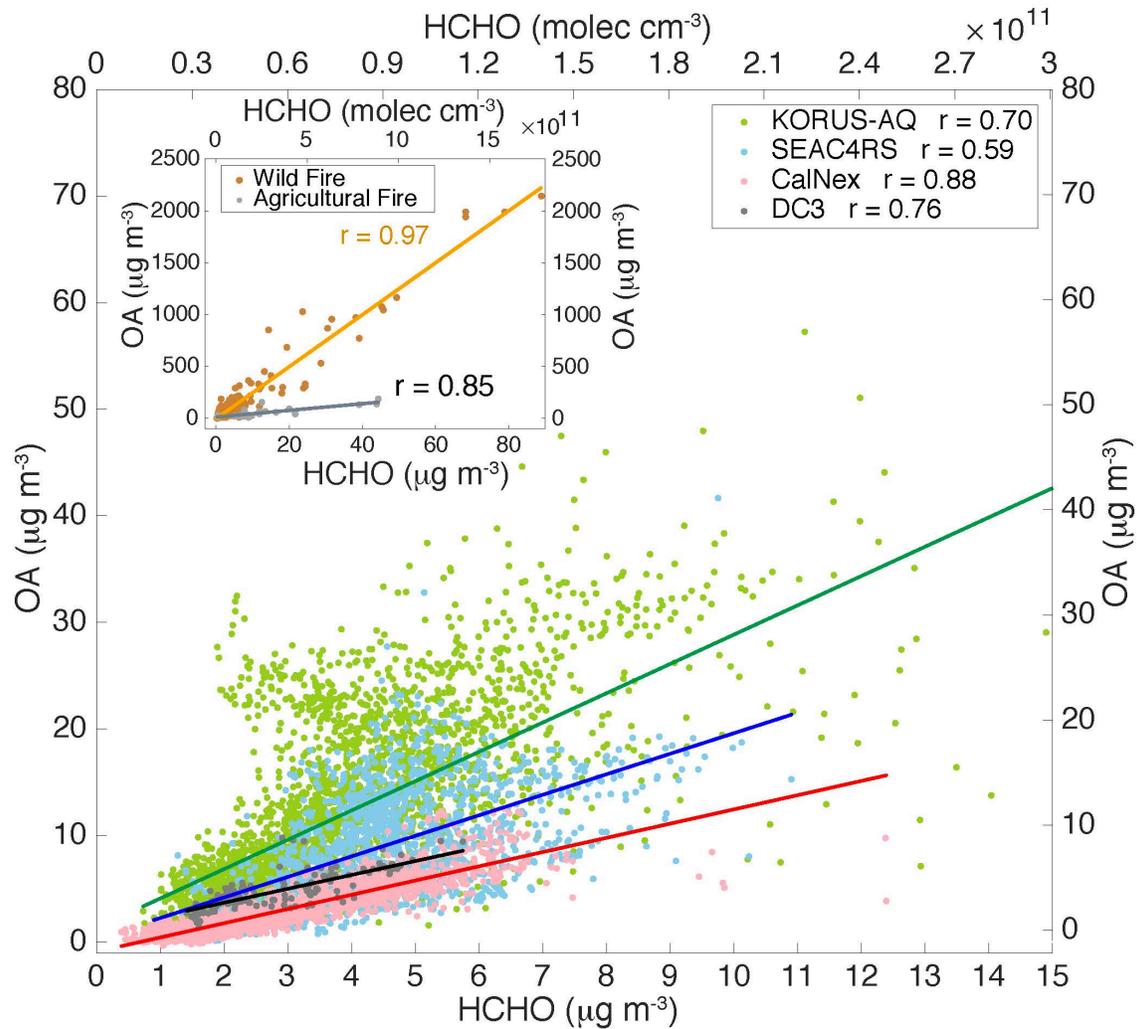
1385 Figure 1. Flight tracks of airborne field campaigns SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS (blue), DC3 (black),  
1386 CalNex (red) and KORUS-AQ (green), of which in situ OA and HCHO measurements  
1387 were used.

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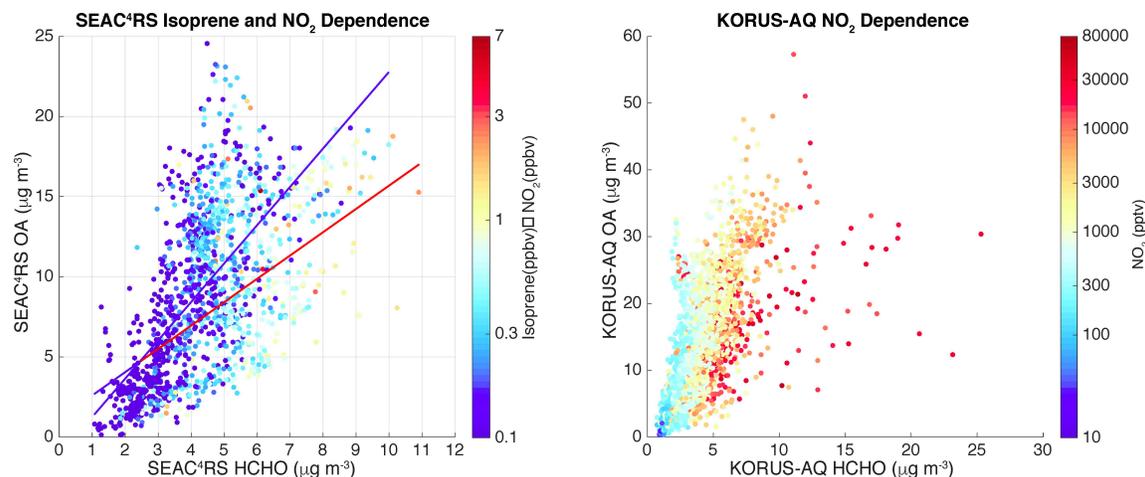
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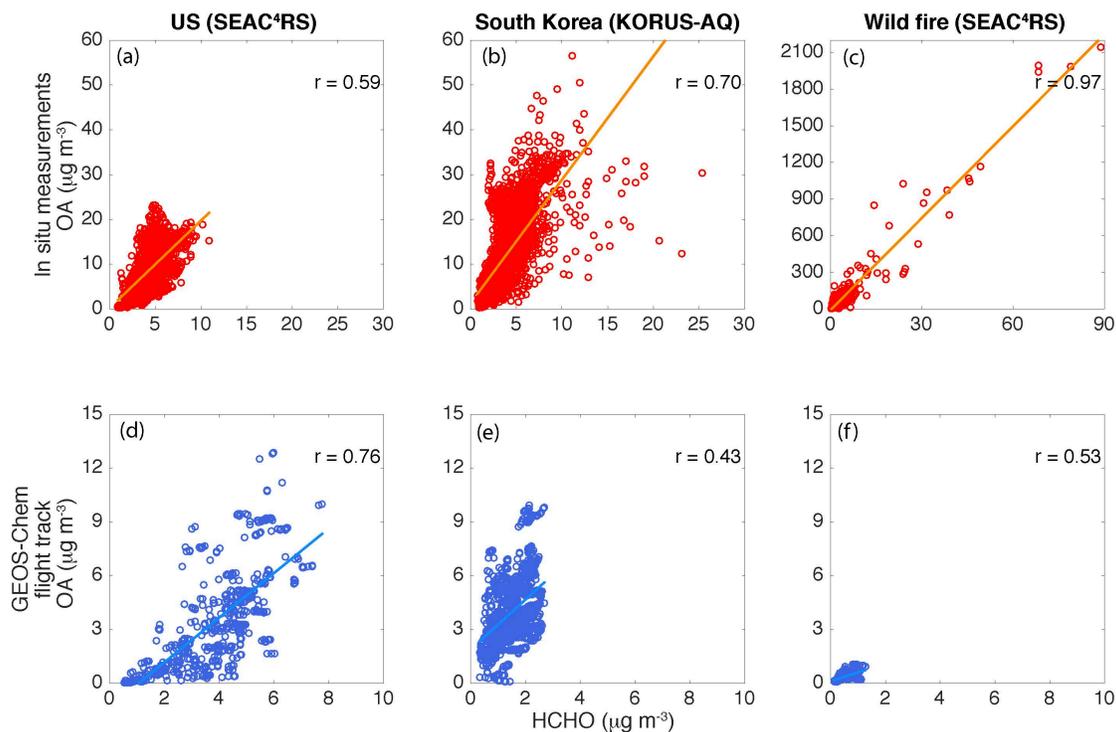
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Figure 2

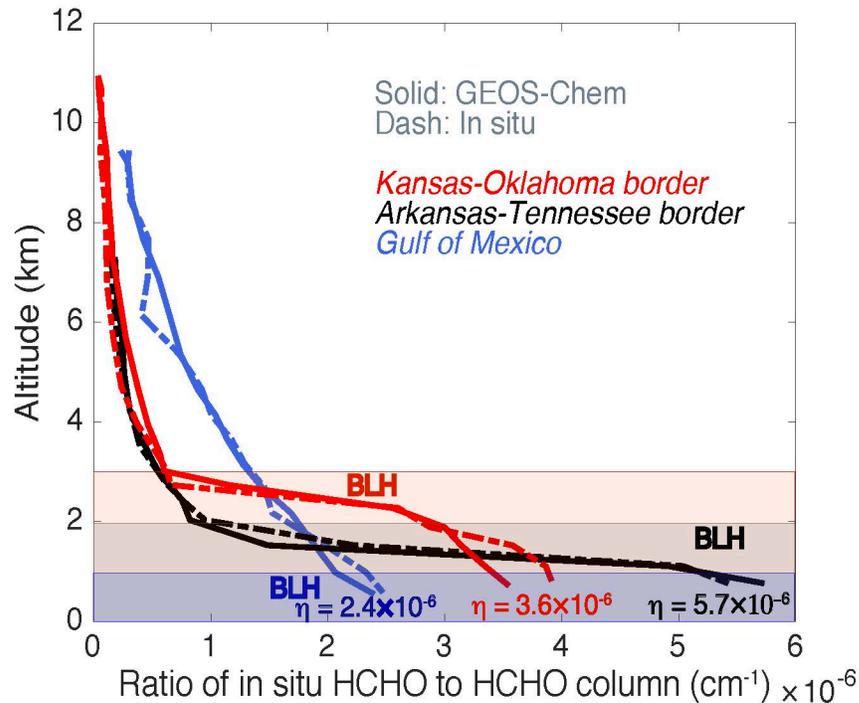
Scatter plots of in situ OA ( $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) vs. HCHO ( $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  or  $\text{molec cm}^{-3}$ ) from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS (excluding biomass burning) (blue), DC3 (dark grey), CalNex (pink), and KORUS-AQ (green) low altitude (< 1 km) data. Inset shows wildfire (brown), and agricultural fire (grey) SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS data. SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS biomass burning cases are defined as acetonitrile > 200 pptv. The linear regression fits are shown as the darker lines and correlation coefficients are provided.



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 1407 Figure 3. (a) A scatter plot of OA vs. HCHO for SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS non-biomass burning low  
 1408 altitude data color-coded with the product of NO<sub>2</sub> and isoprene in log scale. The red and  
 1409 blue lines are the linear regression fits of high (> 0.5) and low (<0.5) product of NO<sub>2</sub>  
 1410 (ppbv) and isoprene (ppbv), respectively. (b) A scatter plot of OA vs. HCHO for  
 1411 KORUS-AQ data color-coded by log(NO<sub>2</sub>).  
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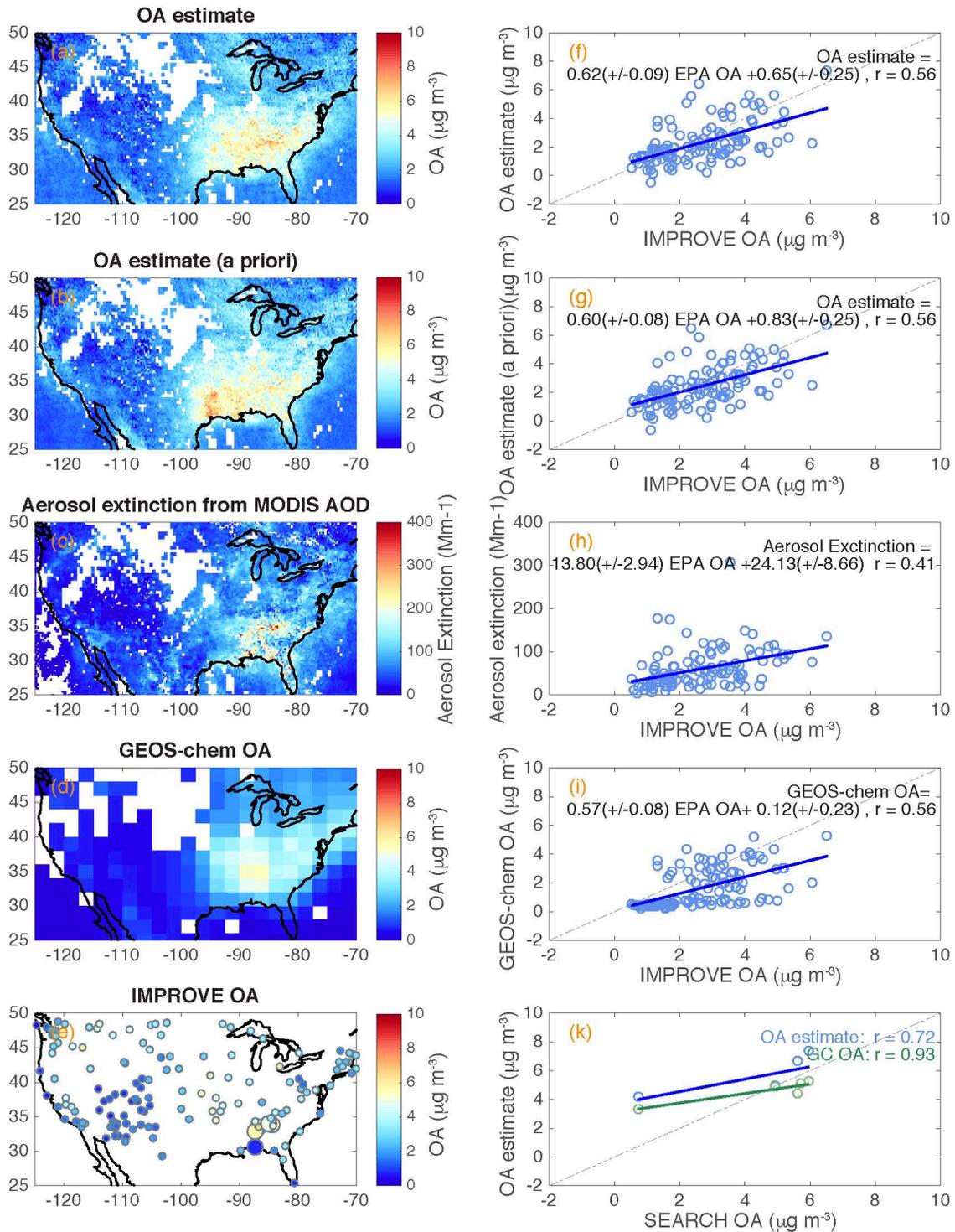


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 1416 Figure 4 Scatter plots of OA vs. HCHO for US (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS altitude < 1 km non-biomass  
 1417 burning), South Korea (KORUS-AQ altitude < 1 km) and wildfire (SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS) from in  
 1418 situ measurements (a, b, c) and GEOS-Chem outputs sampled along the flight tracks  
 1419 (d,e,f).  
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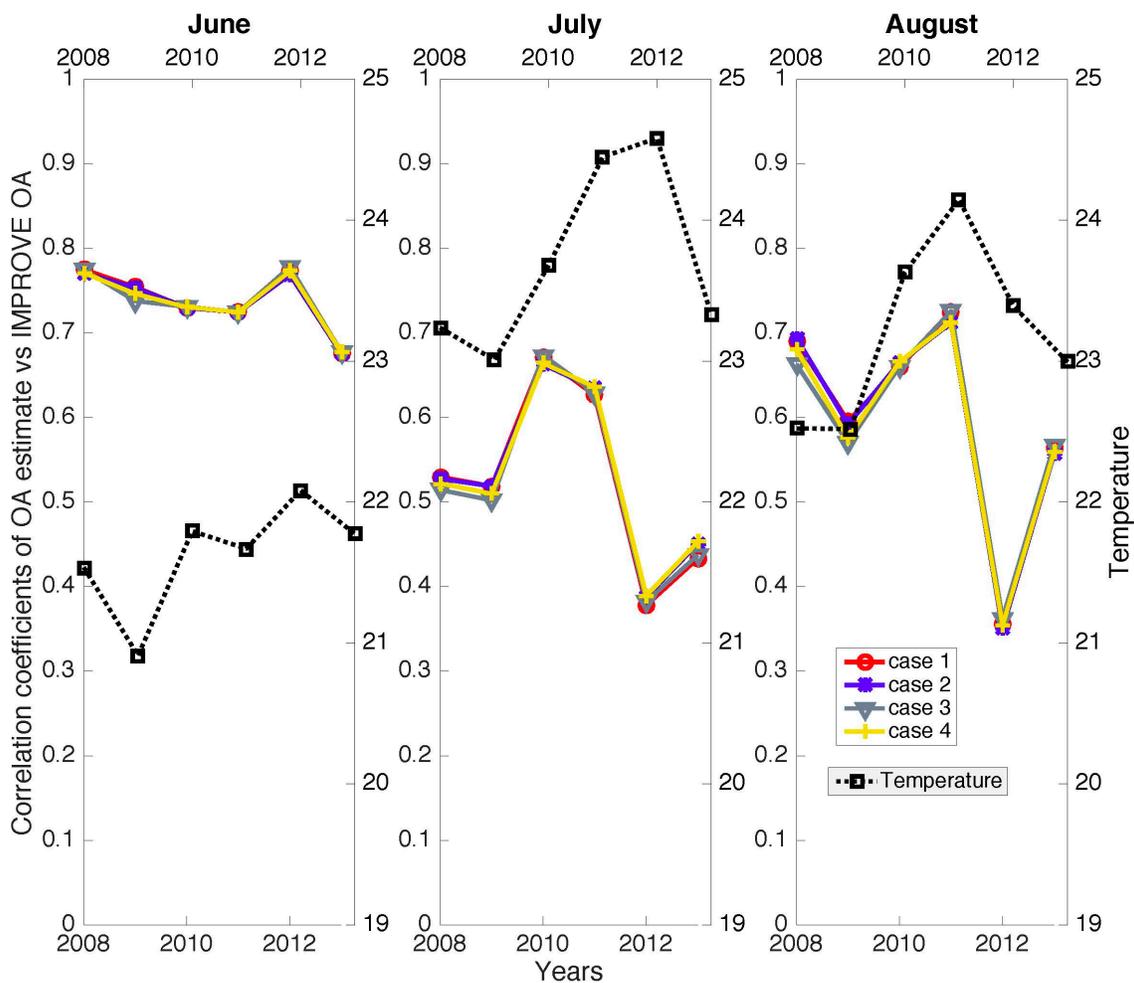
Figure 5. Three typical vertical profiles of the ratio of in situ HCHO concentrations (molec cm<sup>-3</sup>) to integrated HCHO column from SEAC<sup>4</sup>RS flight track. These three profiles were located at Kansas-Oklahoma border (red), Arkansas-Tennessee border (black), and Gulf of Mexico (blue). Solid curves were from GEOS-Chem results and the dashed were from ISAF measurements. HCHO columns were integrated HCHO concentrations of these vertical profiles extrapolated from 0 to 10 km, assuming the HCHO below and above the measured HCHO vertical profiles were the same as the HCHO at the lowest and highest altitudes sampled, respectively. The boundary layer heights (BLH) of these three profiles were plotted by the shaded areas.



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Figure 6. (a) The maps of (a) surface OA estimate (Case 1) with  $\eta$  from GEOS-Chem v9-02, (b) surface OA estimate (Case 1) with  $\eta$  from a priori profiles, (c) surface aerosol extinction derived from MODIS AOD, (d) GEOS-Chem simulated surface OA, and (e) EPA IMPROVE (small dots) and SEARCH (large dots) network ground sites color coded with OA concentrations for August 2013. The scatter plots of (f,g) surface OA estimate, (h) surface aerosol extinction derived from MODIS AOD, and (i) surface GEOS-Chem

1441 OA vs. EPA IMPROVE network ground sites OA. IMPROVE sites OA were corrected  
 1442 for evaporation. (k) The scatter plots of surface OA estimate and GEOS-Chem OA vs.  
 1443 SEARCH network ground sites OA for August 2013. GEOS-Chem OA and OA estimate  
 1444 did not have good correlations with SEARCH OA for other years (SI). For the scatter  
 1445 plots, linear regressions are shown (blue and green lines) and regression equations and  
 1446 correlation coefficients for the scatter plots are listed. The dashed lines in the scatter plots  
 1447 indicate the 1 : 1 line. Biomass burning data (UV aerosol index > 1.6) were excluded in  
 1448 all panels.  
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 1455 Figure 7. The correlation coefficients of the linear regression between the OA estimate  
 1456 from 4 cases (red, blue, gray, and yellow) vs. EPA-corrected OA from 2008 – 2013 for  
 1457 June, July, and August. The monthly average ambient temperature is in black.  
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