

December 14, 2015

First Revision – cp-2015-95

Dear Dr. Masson-Delmotte

Please find attached our revised manuscript entitled “*The WAIS Divide deep ice core WD2014 chronology - Part 2: Annual-layer counting (0–31 ka BP)*”, for publication as a research article in *Climate of the Past*. We would like to thank the two referees for the overall very positive evaluation of our study. We thoroughly considered their constructive comments and suggestions; most of them were incorporated in the revised manuscript, which we believe is now greatly improved as a result. All changes from minor edits to re-writing and adding text as well as a few additional figures as supplementary information are listed in a separated point-by-point response letter.

The new manuscript includes a more detailed description of the underlying assumptions and methods in identifying annual layers with the help of the different methods and datasets. We also outlined in detail our assumptions and uncertainties for synchronicity of the proxy records that we used to assess the age accuracy of the chronology. We also replicated our assessment with a very recently available new high-precision cave record, which fully supported our previous estimates of the ice-core age accuracy.

We are convinced WD2014 will become a reference chronology for the Southern Hemisphere, with synchronization to other chronologies feasible using high quality proxies of volcanism, solar activity, atmospheric mineral dust, and atmospheric methane concentrations. This will give new insights into externally-forced and intrinsic climate variability that can be used to place recent trends of climate variability into a long-term context.

Manuscript Details: Abstract has 223 words. Main text has 8076 words and 87 references. The manuscript includes 10 figures and 5 tables. The supplementary information includes additional text, 4 figures and 1 table.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if anything remains unclear or further information is needed.

On behalf of all authors;

Yours sincerely



We want to thank the reviewers for their positive evaluations of our work, and for the constructive comments. Below we reproduce the reviewer comments in black, with our response in blue.

Reviewer 1:

This manuscript presents a new chronology for the WAIS divide ice core for the last 31 kyr based on annual layer counting. This is an updated chronology with respect to WDC06A-7, based on new datasets (e.g., black carbon, chemistry in the brittle zone, dust in some bottom section) and on new methods (e.g. the automated layer counting algorithms, different manual counting). In section 1, the work is briefly introduced (ice cores in general, WAIS divide, the WDC06A-7 chronology). In section 2, the measurements used are described, as well as the counting methods and the time scale uncertainty. In section 3, WD2014 is compared to other time scales and its accuracy is evaluated. Finally, section 4 concludes the manuscript. This is a technical manuscript describing an age scale. There is no climatic results in the manuscript. The manuscript does not present new concepts, ideas, tools but use new data and new tools. The paper is well written, in a clear and efficient way, although in my opinion some explanations are sometimes missing (see below). This is clearly a step forward with respect to WDC06A-7, judging by the closer agreement to other time scale (e.g., INTCAL13, Hulu).

Response: We appreciate this positive evaluation.

The manuscript needs major revisions in the following areas: - The various parameters used in the automated methods (StratiCounter and the selection curves algorithm) are not described, leading to un-reproducible dating experiments. –

Response: The chemical parameters used for the automatic methods are the same as those used for the manual interpretation and are provided in Table 1. For the two automatic methods that we used in addition to manual interpretation we included citations describing the detailed methods and provide a link to the homepage where the code and more details of the StratiCounter are provided. We have also added a paragraph with more info on how StratiCounter was run, and added a table in the Supplementary Information containing the parameter values used for the various runs of the algorithm.

It is not clearly explained why in some section a method is used (e.g., StratiCounter in the 2020-2300 section) and in some other section another method is used (e.g., the selection curve algorithm in the 2300-2711 section).

Response: The selection curve has been specifically developed for and applied to single-parameter ice-core datasets such as the WDC ECM record (McGwire et al. 2011), whereas the StratiCounter can also be used for multi-parameter datasets. The StratiCounter has previously been used for layer interpretation in ice cores from Greenland (Winstrup et al, 2012) and WAIS-Divide Antarctica (Sigl et al., 2015) and was therefore applied for those WDC sections that have well-resolved multi-parameter datasets with homogenous sampling resolution. Within the brittle ice section, the character of the data is varying between sections because different measurement techniques (discrete vs. continuous) have been used depending on ice-core quality. Therefore, we have here not used the StratiCounter as an additional method but rely on manual interpretation. We added the explanation to the manuscript.

- The manuscript does not quantitatively evaluate the uncertainty of the time scale. There is only a qualitative discussion in section 2.4, but no numbers are given. The accuracy of the time scale is discussed in section 3.3 but this is not an independent error estimate!

- This is also due to the fact that there is no counting of uncertain layers, as was done in GICC05. For me, this is a clear step backward with respect to GICC05. The tentative explanation of why this has not been done in pp. 3439-3440 is not convincing at all! For me, it appears that the authors just did not take the time to do it.

Response: There is no way to objectively estimate the uncertainty in annual-layer counting of a single deep ice core because the process of interpreting annual layers is highly subjective. The reviewer suggests

that by defining and summing up “uncertain layers” an independent error estimate may be achieved. However, any definition of “uncertain layer” is subjective as well, and there will be in reality a wide range of certainty levels for each formally defined “uncertain layer” from “virtually certain” to “very likely not”. The GICC05 dating approach done for Greenland was formally defining “uncertain layers” and counted these as $0.5 \text{ years} \pm 0.5 \text{ years}$ (Svensson et al., 2008). The sum of these subjectively defined layers was interpreted to represent the maximum counting error (MCE) using the assumption that the interpretation errors are equally split between too many and too few years. However, it is also impossible to evaluate if this assumption is valid. There may be a bias towards one direction, if for example some species used for dating sometimes have two deposition maxima. Recent attempts to assess the dating accuracy and precision of the GICC05 timescale using various methods, all have demonstrated that GICC05 has a clear tendency over the Holocene to result in too old ages (Baillie and McAneney, 2015; Lohne et al., 2013; Muscheler et al., 2014; Sigl et al., 2015) which also fall partly outside the estimates of annual-layer counting uncertainties of this chronology. This suggests that the subjective approach to measure a “maximum counting error” by summing “uncertain layers” may not be suited to produce realistic, objective estimates of the uncertainty in annual-layer dating of ice cores. In the light of this evidence, we refrained from trying to derive objective estimates of annual-layer counting uncertainty by subjectively assigning and counting uncertain layers, an approach which was also approved by referee 2. What is needed to really improve ice-core chronologies are more and higher resolved measurements of strongly seasonally varying tracers. Here, WDC in comparison to many other ice-cores provides an unprecedented rich record of highly resolved measurements at a site with high-snowfall and a smooth climate evolution. The latter assures that our ability to identify annual layers in the measurements is almost entirely controlled by data resolution; with limited effects arising from rapidly changing climate conditions that may alter the structure of typical annual cycle over time.

- The manuscript could include some discussion on the accumulation reconstruction, after a correction for the vertical thinning: 1) comparison to other climatic proxies such as deuterium, 2) distributions of annual layer thickness at different time periods. That would give a small climatic aspect to the manuscript.

Response: Precise chronologies are key information in studying past climate. Given the substantial length of the manuscript, and also in the light of the additional detailed information we provide in the revised version to allow a better understanding behind the rationale of our interpretation procedures, we refrain from showing and discussing in addition deuterium series or accumulation rates. These records are also already discussed in WAIS Divide Community Members (2013, 2015), and have only marginally changed by the revision of the dating.

Minors comments:

- Figures are numbered from their order of appearance in the text (e.g., Fig. 8 appears right after Fig. 5)

Response: Earlier in the text we mentioned that we first discuss different ice-core sections (Figs. 4-7) before summarizing the resulting depth-age profile in Fig. 8. So the appearance is in agreement with the text.

- Section 3.4 (comparison to GICC05) should appear before section 3.3 (age accuracy)

Response: Our estimates of the age accuracy rely on the comparison to tree-rings and the precisely dated Hulu record, and it is not based on comparison to GICC05. The comparison to Greenland was made in addition because this chronology is widely used in the Northern Hemisphere as a reference chronology. Therefore we have kept the ordering of the sections as is.

- In Figure 9, the 0.5% confidence interval does not seem to be linear at ~2.5 ka. Why?

Response: Before 2.5 ka BP we assume that the age accuracy is better than 0.5%, because WD2014 has been constrained at 775 CE with a calendar-date based on tree-ring chronologies using a distinctive match between ^{10}Be and ^{14}C (Sigl et al., 2015). In addition, several large WDC sulfate signals have been identified (due to corresponding sulfate signals from Greenland) as signatures of tropical volcanic eruptions, and the dates of these eruptions are constrained by tree-ring indicated cooling minima for the

past 2,500 yrs (Sigl et al., 2015). We have added a sentence about this to the paper, as well as a short note and citation to the figure caption explaining the resulting non-linearity.

Reviewer 2:

This paper describes the new WD2014 chronology for the WAIS Divide ice core as far as 31.2 ka, where annual layer counting was abandoned. Clearly, good documentation of a timescale for such an important ice core as WAIS Divide is crucial. Here it is of particular importance as this is the only layer counted age scale (at least extending beyond a few centuries) from Antarctica, and it is therefore likely it will become a standard, much as GICC05 has, to be transposed to other cores and to records from other palaeoclimate media. The paper presents clearly which data were used, and relatively clearly how the counting itself was done (though I do have some questions about that). The examples shown are, in the main, quite convincing that a good layer counted age model could be achieved in this core. I also appreciate that the authors stopped layer counting once they no longer believed in the viability of the method. The paper presents a discussion of uncertainty that is mature and philosophical, although again I have some comments about it in detail. It includes a good comparison with other age models although I think the assumptions behind that need to be explored a little further, and that the conclusion of the comparison should be tied up in the discussion of uncertainty. However in general the paper does what the title suggests and deserves to be published in CP with relatively minor changes.

Response: We appreciate this positive evaluation.

I apologise to the authors that I am asking very picky questions but I think the assumptions made in layer counting need to be tested and improved. This age model is likely to be very important so I think it's worth documenting all the assumptions as carefully as possible. In practice this will involve quite small but important textual changes.

Detailed comments

Page 3428, line 13 and elsewhere. The Edwards et al paper seems to be in permanent review (it was also in review when the Buizert et al Part I of this paper was published). Please check its status before publication. However, more important, at section 3.2, the reader needs to be able to see the speleothem $\delta^{18}O$ data in order to judge whether the claimed synchronisation can really be achieved (some DO events don't give sharp transitions in some speleothems). Since the deeper data were already published in Buizert et al, I am going to insist that the data for at least 27-31 ka are shown in an extra figure in this paper please.

Response: We agree that it is very unfortunate that the original publication is still in review. However, the data of interest is shown in Fig. 5 in Part 1 of this paper (Buizert et al., 2015). We made a direct reference in our manuscript to this specific figure.

Page 3430, para 1. You explain that resolution for most analytes was 1-2 cm which allows annual layers of 7 cm to be identified (sounds a bit marginal, but OK), and you state that layers of 2.5 cm can be identified using dust but you don't say what the resolution of the dust data was; please do so here.

Response: The dust resolution is estimated to be 0.5 cm (see Table 1). We have also added this information to the main text.

Page 3433, line 13. I wonder why you say that manual interpretation is the "best" method. In what way is it best? I think this may be a hangover from previous layer counting philosophies. Of course humans will always see layers even when the automated system doesn't but does that make them better? What about the possibility that the manual counters are imagining layers (knowing the expected spacing) where the automated system correctly doesn't see them? Additionally I would argue that the automated system offers at least the possibility of giving an objective uncertainty estimate, as one can vary the parameters in the underlying model (peak shape and allowed spacing) within ranges estimated from modern seasonal

cycles to get a range of layer counts. I don't think much needs changing here, but I just find that the statement that manual interpretation is in some cases "best" hides a lot of assumptions that should perhaps be explained to the reader who hasn't been exposed to the arguments.

Response: We slightly changed the wording and provided a case study (Supplementary Fig. 2) to better support our opinion that when data resolution becomes a limiting factor for many parameters, manual layer counting is in many cases allowing to correctly identify annual-layers that have not been recognized as such by an automated-layer-detection algorithm.

Page 3434, line 20. 12:57???

Response: Corrected to 1257 CE

Page 3435. I appreciate the honesty, that when there was uncertainty about layers, two investigators came to a consensus. But I think it would be more useful for the reader if you said what was the thinking behind that consensus. For example, in Fig 4, there is an obvious uncertain layer at about 1017.05 m: a clear extra peak in nitrate and DEP, as well as an extra peak in Na (albeit with a slightly unusual timing). What were the rules that led to the investigators deciding that this was not an extra year? Was it that the lack of peak in sulfate took precedence, or that the two layers would be too narrow compared to your assumptions about layer thickness? Did you always apply the same rules consistently?

Response: We added a section as (Supplementary Information) where we show for selected sections ice-core records and give examples of the involved decision processes. No layer looks exactly the same as the others and there are no strict rules that we could apply equally on all our decisions. The final consensus further has many dimensions. First, the individual investigator performing the manual multi-parameter interpretation needed to get to a consensus decision based solely on the various aerosol records. Hereby, usually (in the absence of strong volcanic, biomass burning, sea-salt or dust deposition events) nssS and BC took precedence over Na. The reason is that it very unlikely that secondary nssS peaks occur in the austral winter season because oceanic DMS emissions (the main source of nssS deposited at WDC) are minimal in the cold and dark winter months. In contrast, it only takes a strong summer storm to cause a secondary Na peak, because sea-salt is ubiquitous abundant in the oceans surrounding Antarctica, which is much more likely to occur over longer time periods. Biomass burning emissions are also expected to occur more confined to a distinctive season as they are in the southern hemisphere mostly driven by seasonal insolation changes. In addition, as BC measurements are particulate bound, the annual cycle in the ice is more conservative to any post-depositional displacement, which could hamper correct annual layer interpretation. It has been shown, for example, in ice cores from Greenland and Antarctica that H_2SO_4 of volcanic origin can cause NO_3 to move in the ice (by diffusion in the firn air) leading to increased NO_3 concentrations directly above and below large H_2SO_4 peaks (Clausen et al., 1997; Röthlisberger et al., 2002). This process may also explain the extra peaks and unusual timing of $[\text{NO}_3^-]$, $[\text{Na}]$ and DEP observed in WDC at 1017 m depth in the direct vicinity of the large nss SO_4 peak in Fig. 4. Here, our decision of not interpreting an extra layer was strongly relying on the absence of an according sulfate peak in WDC, supported by a resulting layer thickness in agreement with surrounding layers.

Page 3435, line 19. Why was Straticounter not run? Based on Fig 4 it looks like a section in which the program should have worked well?

Response: We agree with the reviewer, that the StratiCounter would in principle also work for the brittle ice section. However, the measurement resolution and thus the shape of the aerosol records is varying more than in the sections above and below, because different measurement techniques (discrete vs. continuous) have been used alternately depending on ice-core quality. Therefore, we have not used the StratiCounter as an additional method but rely on manual interpretation only. We added a note in the main text.

Page 3436, line 1 and 2. Again I am interested in the process when there was disagreement. Please provide (in supplement?) a couple of examples where the 3 interpretations disagreed, explaining how you reached a consensus, so that the reader can judge what you are taking as the rules in such a case.

Response: We provide some selected case studies (Supplementary Information) and outline some of the ideas behind our decisions.

First, we must clarify that our layer interpretation decisions were not based on figures such as displayed in the manuscript. Manual interpretation of the aerosol records was for example performed with all eight records superimposed on one graph and subsequently “switching” certain records on and off during the counting process. The bromine record, for example, which shares a lot of variability with the nssS-record was in the manual interpretation only used in the presence of large volcanic eruptions that masked the annual cycle of marine biogenic sulfur deposition. It is, however, very difficult to display for the reader all the individual datasets used for our interpretation, still show enough fine details to discuss decisions for “uncertain layers” and at the same time provide a large enough window to show the typical layering at these depths. In contrast to the reader, both investigators performing the manual interpretation had the advantage to train their decision process on many thousands of annual layers. Moreover, the different interpretation methods result in slightly different positions of the annual layer boundaries so it becomes difficult to exactly localize in a figure where the disagreement between the results takes place. Within the appendix we now display the interpretation results of the multi-parameter approaches (manual and StratiCounter) on top of one individual dataset, although in reality all datasets contributed more or less equally to the interpretation.

Page 3436, line 15-18. Please redraft as this seems to be circular, appearing to say that since you didn’t use Straticounter (for unexplained reasons), you couldn’t use the algorithm.

Response: Done. We stopped to use the algorithm because we noticed that in the previous sections the number of annual layers detected by the StratiCounter started to slowly drift away from the other two interpretations which we attribute to the lower data resolution below 2000 m (Supplementary Fig. S2).

Page 3436 and other places. It seems that (Table 2) when you used ECM alone you overcounted compared to other methods and your consensus by around 1%. But you did not then adjust your ECM counts below 2300 m for this apparently well-justified correction. Why not?

Response: The ECM interpretation below 2020 m had already incorporated knowledge by comparison with the multi-parameter data between 1940 and 2020 m. This is part of the reason why we did not identify a consistent 1% bias below 2300 m (and hence didn’t correct for it). The other part of the reason is that the character of the ECM data (and multi-parameter data too) changes significantly between the Holocene and the glacial-interglacial transition. Therefore, the consistent 1% bias of the Holocene isn’t directly applicable to transition and glacial segments.

We have added a short discussion of this to the following paragraph:

In this depth interval, the aerosol records did not have sufficient depth resolution for reliable identification of the annual signal so the annual-layer interpretation is based solely on ECM data. The interpretation was not changed from WDC06A-7 because (a) the ECM interpretation agreed well with the consensus interpretation between 2020 and 2300 m (Table 2), (b) it agreed well with the dust data between 2711 and 2800 m (Table 2), (c) the age comparison in the glacial period (Sect. 3.2) showed no significant bias, and (d) the 1% bias identified during the Holocene is not directly applicable to the full length of the ice core due to the different character of the annual signal in ice from the glacial and glacial-interglacial transition. The only period of reinterpretation is for 2421.75 and 2427.25m depth corresponding to a period of enhanced acid deposition at WAIS-Divide that forms a distinctive horizon and prominent radar reflector across West Antarctica (Hammer et al., 1997; Jacobel and Welch, 2005). During this approximately 200 year long deposition event, the annual-layer dating was based on dust particle concentrations. The additional measurements were made using a second stick from the main core and a modified analytical setup with increased measurement resolution of the Abakus particle counter.

Annual layers in the dust were identified using the automated interpretation from the selection curve algorithm (McGwire et al., 2011) with manual adjustments that included the ECM data during periods without volcanic acid deposition.

Page 3437-8. I am wondering exactly what decided where you stopped counting. Please in Fig 7 show a section below 2850 m so we can see what is worse about the ECM data there. There is already a lot of uncertainty in the sections shown so it would be helpful to see what a section you consider uncountable looks like.

Response: During the manual interpretation of the ECM, the difficulty in identifying annual layers notably increased between 2850 m and 2900 m. The increased difficulty was associated with broad peaks and troughs such that the annual layer thickness appears to be increasing in short sections while the annual layer thickness remained smaller in nearby sections. It seemed like an increasing number of annual layers were not being resolved even though the vast majority of annual layers remained identifiable. Therefore, we terminated the interpretation at 2850 m, just older than DO 5.1 which provided a tie point to transition to the stratigraphic dating (Buizert et al., 2015).

We have added a Figure to the Supplementary Information (Fig. S3) showing ECM data from 2857.4 to 2858.2 m. Note that the annual signal appears fairly strong, but there is an increasing frequency of large width “probably-not-really-annual” cycles which are difficult to determine whether they should be one year or two.

Page 3437. You haven’t mentioned here the additional difficulty that, once we reach glacial climate we can no longer be sure if the seasonality of inputs remained the same. This is a critically difficult issue for counting in Greenland where almost everything gets controlled by dust once glacial ice is reached. It is likely less severe for WAIS Divide but even so it is worth discussing (for example it is not so obvious whether nitrate would appear in summer or be associated with dust in the glacial period; I note that you don’t show nitrate in the deeper ice however).

Response: This appears to be minor problem for WDC. During ACR dust deposition is already comparable low and only a slight shift in seasonality is observed (see BC, ECM in Fig. 2) which is not so significant to adversely influence the ability to identify annual layers. During the last Glacial the dating is only based on one (ECM) or two parameters (ECM/dust) with clearly opposing maxima/minima indicating summer and winter conditions (see Fig. 3). We added a very brief discussion of the comparable small influence of the increased atmospheric dust burden on the layer counting during the Glacial.

Page 3439-3440. I appreciate and even agree with your reasoning for not giving an uncertainty and claiming it has any particular statistical significance. However, it would still be interesting to understand how much variability there is between counters given the same rules for example. Can you give at least an idea whether individual counters had differences of order 1%, 3%, 10%? This is just an aside and nothing to be done in this paper, but there is actually an issue I have never understood here that an unbiased person looking at the examples given in this paper and in GICC05 papers would give a huge number of uncertain layers (probably much larger than the quoted errors), and yet comparisons with other data suggest the errors are very small. It is sometimes claimed this is because counters are as likely to add as subtract a real year, but that assumes that all their assumptions and rules are correct and it is just as likely that they only add or only subtract years. I am therefore amazed that layer counts work out as well as they do.

Response: We have not performed a cross-comparison between different interpreters using the same data and some pre-defined rules for interpretation. The comparison between StratiCounter and manual interpretation comes closest to this scenario and differences are smaller than 1% during the Holocene. During the ACR, we assume the differences could be as much as 3%. We suggest layer counting works so well because even if there is uncertainty in the layer we still perform the right decision more often than the wrong decision, most likely because we will more often favor the interpretation resulting in the best agreement with the surrounding layer thickness, intuitively avoiding statistically rare extremes.

Page 3441, line 6. Why do you assume that Straticounter missed layers rather than assuming that manual counters are adding in layers that don't exist? Can you look at specific examples where the methods agree and see what kind of features are being interpreted as years by manual counters but ignored by Straticounter. I see 3 options: 1) Straticounter is genuinely not tuned to see layers that exist; 2) manual counters are adding in layers that don't exist; 3) manual counters are adding in layers that are real years but that that don't have any real expression (in which case why are they doing that?). It would be interesting to consider which it is.

Response: Our interpretation is based on 1) the high level of agreement in the two fully independent interpretations of ECM and chemistry; 2) the resulting annual-layer thickness relative to the local average; 3) the fact that the HMM algorithm has not been specifically trained on time period where the data resolution is becoming a major limitation. The case studies provided in Supplementary Figures S1 and S2 of the revised manuscript will better visualize some of our assumptions.

Page 3444, line 6 “currently being undertaken”

Response: Changed

Page 3445, line 1. I think you are underplaying the assumption you are making here. Your assumption is that the jump in methane and the jump in speleo 18O are simultaneous within some uncertainty that is not being explained here. This may indeed turn out to be the case but it is far from being proved yet. And I think this really needs to be explained. Actually the assumption that Greenland 18O and methane are synchronous has been shown only for one DO jump by Rosen et al (it would be great to see more events so we can decide if this is a rule); the assumption that methane and speleo 18O are in synch rests on the idea that both are responding to rainfall in the same region and that the speleo has an instant response to rainfall 18O. This is a reasonable idea, but has really not been proved: there are numerous ways in which it could be wrong. It is certainly not yet clear that different speleos give the same dates for each DO event, and the European ice core groups have been holding off applying speleo dates to their cores until there is more evidence. The references given in line 2 of this page don't justify the assumption at all, they merely state it. I think this issue can be dealt with by spelling out in detail the reasoning behind the assumption and perhaps some estimate of the uncertainty in the assumption could be made. (An alternative approach would actually be to turn this on its head: if you could find an alternative way to put an uncertainty on the counted age scale, then the close agreement of the counted age model to the Hulu ages actually supports the assumption. However, obviously you have to be careful with this: you can't use the same agreement in both directions, or it becomes circular.)

Response: The assumptions of why we consider rapid transitions in Greenland temperatures, Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and WDC CH_4 to be effectively synchronous at decadal timescales should ideally have been discussed in more detail in the Buizert et al. (2015) but are summarized below (and reproduced in the Supplementary Information). We also provide a modification of Fig. 10 (as Supplementary Figure 4), in which we added three age comparisons to a European stalagmite which provides high-precision ages (± 50 -70 years, 2σ) for the climate transitions completely independent from Hulu. Age differences relative to WD2014 are as small as 23, 22 and 11 years respectively, thus providing additional independent evidence of the high level of age accuracy of WD2014.

Assumptions and uncertainties in the synchronicity of Greenland $\delta^{18}\text{O}$, Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}$, WDC CH_4 for rapid warming events:

Speleothems in the Alps and other parts of Europe clearly show the DO events as abrupt changes in calcite $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ (Luetscher et al., 2015; Moseley et al., 2014; Spötl et al., 2006). Atmospheric models suggest that any DO abrupt change recorded in Greenland should be essentially synchronous with European stalagmites (Pausata et al., 2011). So there is generally broad agreement that European stalagmites are unquestionably synchronous at the level of several decades or less. This “several decades” figure comes

from the models. In fact most of the change happens in one year, but several decades is a conservative figure that allows for the well-known unforced variability in the climate system. One way to think of this, is that the canonical definition of climate is the "30-year average of weather" in a given spot. This 30-yr figure essentially characterizes the unforced variability that we all see in the model runs and in the real climate record. So the real question is, are European stalagmite DO signals synchronous with Chinese cave stalagmite DO signals? Here the models again show that they are synchronous within several decades. The physics of this tele-connection are not as well understood as the Greenland-Europe one, but probably have to do with the southward shift of the wintertime westerlies during a Greenland Stadial when much of the North Atlantic ocean is covered with sea ice. This is indeed what the models show (Pausata et al., 2011). The cold winter air travels across the Mediterranean, over the Arabian peninsula, and across the northern Indian ocean, where it cools the ocean substantially. Because of the thermal memory of the ocean, this cool anomaly persists into the following summer, when it causes a weak monsoon. The link between north Indian ocean SST and the strength of the Asian monsoon is well documented and makes good physical sense. During an interstadial, by contrast, the winter westerlies go across the Asian land mass. Land does not have the thermal memory that the ocean does, so the following summer's monsoon is not as affected. All of these physical processes have inherent timescales of a few decades or less, the time it takes to warm and cool the upper ocean. So from first principles and physics we would expect the Chinese caves to lag European caves by no more than several decades.

Another test of the hypothesis of synchronicity comes from the fine structure of the Chinese cave $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and Greenland $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and calcium records. Both contain astonishingly high resolution structure on timescales of a century or less, that is virtually identical in its frequency content (see Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 in Buizert et al., 2015). We know a priori that realistic physical processes in the climate system, that cause lags, also cause smoothing - i.e. loss of high frequency content. For example, warming of the ocean acts as an integrator resulting in a lag of ocean temperature behind Greenland temperature, and a loss of high frequency signals in the ocean temperature record. Therefore, we would expect a reduction of the high-frequency content in Chinese caves if there were a substantial lag. More precisely, century-scale oscillations in Chinese caves should be substantially damped in amplitude if there were a century-scale lag of China behind Greenland. The records in fact show no such loss of high frequencies. The sampling resolution of the new Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ record is about 10 years, and the frequency content of this record is not significantly different from that of the Greenland calcium and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ records, when those records have been resampled at 10-yr spacing to mimic the Hulu sample spacing.

A further test comes from the methane itself. Modern observations confirm that the Asian monsoon region is an important contributor to the global methane budget (Xiong et al., 2009; Xiong et al., 2010). Based on this reasoning, and bottom-up models of vegetation and methane production that show response times of a few decades or less to abrupt changes in monsoon rainfall, one expects that methane change could be a proxy for the timing of monsoon rainfall change. In fact, the well-known observation from Greenland ice core methane and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ records (Severinghaus et al., 1998) is indeed that abrupt change in methane concentration during DO events lags behind Greenland $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and calcium by 30 yr or less typically (when measured as the lag of methane's mid-point behind $\delta^{18}\text{O}$'s and calcium's midpoint). Note that Rosen et al., (2014) did not measure this lag. There has been some confusion in the literature about this. Rosen et al., (2014) measured the phasing of the onset or inflection point at the beginning of the methane rise and the beginning of the temperature (i.e. $\delta^{15}\text{N}$) rise, finding that they were synchronous within uncertainty, with a most-probable lag of methane's onset by 5 years.

Greenland methane and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ phasing has not only been measured except by Rosen et al., (2014), but Baumgartner et al., (2014) also did an extensive study of this phasing for most of the DO events. We estimate that about 17-20 of the DO events have had their methane- $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ phasing measured.

The overall conclusion of this methane-based test is that DO events caused changes in methane production within several decades following Greenland warming. It seems unlikely that Chinese methane sources somehow lagged the pulse of methane production elsewhere. If they did, there ought to be delayed increases in methane concentration observed in the record, but these are not observed. Instead

the methane shoots up to an apparently stable Interstadial value within typically 50 yr. To summarize, the hypothesis that fits the data best, is that Chinese methane sources responded synchronously with all other low-latitude sources.

Page 3446, line 12-15. This is not really clear. Please rewrite. Also your statement that age errors tend to cancel out assumes the errors are based on something random whereas they could just as easily be systematic (e.g. if you always count shoulders as years when in fact they aren't).

Response: Due to this issue of a potential bias we stopped using the chemistry data at 2300 m and we also stopped using the ECM data at 2850 m. Until these depths, we assumed our errors to be random, mostly because we could avoid large systematic errors by using independent information where possible. In case of a shoulder in some of the data, we could also investigate resulting layer thickness and higher resolved ECM, so putting less weight into the individual datasets. We thus assume the dating error is random over the past 31,000 years. This assumption seems valid at least over the Holocene as demonstrated by the comparable small mean ice-core/tree-ring age-offset varying around zero. Overall, as summarized above, there are no indications that the ECM interpretation in the deeper part is biased towards one direction. All available independent age markers (Hulu, Intcal) are well within our estimates of age uncertainty with independently well-dated volcanic tephra falls providing potential for further evaluation in the near future (Vandergoes et al., 2013). However, for shorter time periods, such as for example the duration between DO events the relative age uncertainty can be larger (we estimate up to 1-2%). The age offset between ice-cores and tree-rings, for example, changes by 24 years (1.2%) within 2,000 years (from 8.5 to 10.5 ka BP).

We changed the sentence to: *“We recognize that is not a rigorous determination of uncertainty; however, it is the best that can be done with the information that is available now or in the foreseeable future. We assumed our errors to be random, mostly because we could avoid large systematic errors by using independent information where possible taking advantage of the multiple different aerosol records (see Supplementary Information Figs. S1, S2 for details). The assumption of random interpretation errors seems valid at least over the Holocene as demonstrated by the comparable small mean ice-core/tree-ring age-offset varying around zero (Fig. 9). We note that the uncertainty in the duration between two climate events is not the difference between the age accuracy of the two climate events. The age accuracy decreases slowly on the assumption that uncertainties in the annual layer count will tend to cancel. Therefore, for short intervals, the uncertainty in the duration is better estimated by the interpretation repeatability and we suggest to use 1% during the Holocene and 2% during the Glacial.”*

Page 3448, line 26. I know it is often misused but the site is either Dome C or Concordia Station, but not Dome Concordia.

Response: We changed it to Dome C

Page 3448. It should probably be mentioned that because of the many local volcanoes in West Antarctica, matching between WAIS Divide and East Antarctic cores is a little trickier than it sounds – but I agree it should be done.

Response: Acknowledged. But it should be relative straightforward, as there are many other proxies (e.g. crypto-tephra) to discriminate between local/regional and remote volcanism.

Table 2. I am a little mystified that the consensus is sometimes (1940-2020 m, 2711-2800 m) higher than any of the individual methods. Please clarify in the text how this happen.

Response: Between 1940-2020 m the interpretation has been originally been performed on the basis of all records (ECM and chemistry) by two investigators (see footnote in the table). Therefore, no individual count is available, except for the StratiCounter performed later. From 2711-2800 m, the referee must have misread the table as the consensus decision is between ECM and StratiCounter results.

Fig 2. Please explain how you set month zero (is it based on Na at month 6, or what?)

Response: The month zero is equivalent to the position of our annual layer boundaries (nominal January first), broadly consistent with the minimum in [Na]. We added this information to the caption.

Fig 3: is the lack on annual cycle in Na due to resolution issues? If so, I am not sure this plot makes much sense, but perhaps I missed its purpose.

Response: The lack of the annual cycle in Na is due to the loss in resolution. Compared with Figure 2 this is a visual representation of how the limited resolution adversely affects our possibility to use Na in the deeper part.

And just to emphasise again that I think we should see Hulu 18O and methane for 27-31 ka please in a new figure.

Response: As outlined before the Hulu DO 3-5.1 are indeed already visible to the general reader, in the published literature and we provided a reference to the published figure in Buizert et al., (2015) showing the WDC CH₄ and the Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ record.

In my earlier comment i forgot to ask what data will be made available as a supplement to this paper. In other recent papers reviewers seem to have been asking for raw data to be posted so that other readers could, should they wish, independently count layers or compare age models. That would be great as it would allow other automated or manual methods to be applied. But at minimum an Excel file giving a metre by metre depth-age translation is required, so that if the age model changes in future readers can always get back to a depth and do the translation.

Response: We will provide a year-by-year depth translation that will allow the reader to directly assess the layer-thickness profile through time. Raw data can be requested for dating purposes and will be subsequently posted in public data repositories.

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The WAIS Divide deep ice core WD2014 chronology - Part

2: Annual-layer counting (0–31 ka BP)

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Abstract

We present the WD2014 chronology for the upper part (0–2850 m, 31.2 ka BP) of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) Divide ice core. The chronology is based on counting of annual layers observed in the chemical, dust and electrical conductivity records. These layers are caused by seasonal changes in the source, transport, and deposition of aerosols. The measurements were interpreted manually and with the aid of two automated methods. We validated the chronology by comparing to two high-accuracy, absolutely dated chronologies. For the Holocene, the cosmogenic isotope records of ¹⁰Be from WAIS Divide and ¹⁴C for Intcal13 demonstrated WD2014 was consistently accurate to better than 0.5% of the age. For the glacial period, comparisons to the Hulu Cave chronology demonstrated WD2014 had an accuracy of better than 1% of the age at three abrupt climate change events between 27 and 31 ka. WD2014 has consistently younger ages than Greenland ice-core chronologies during most of the Holocene. For the Younger Dryas-Preboreal transition (11,595 ka BP, 24 years younger) and the Bølling-Allerød Warming (14,621 ka, 7 years younger) WD2014 ages are within the combined uncertainties of the timescales. Given its high accuracy, WD2014 can become a reference chronology for the Southern Hemisphere, with synchronization to other chronologies feasible using high quality proxies of volcanism, solar activity, atmospheric mineral dust, and atmospheric methane concentrations.

1 Introduction

Polar ice cores are a powerful tool for investigating past changes in the Earth's climate, and are the only direct measure of past concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. (Monnin et al., 2001; Siegenthaler et al., 2005; Marcott et al., 2014). Ice cores also provide insight into other climate forcing mechanisms, such as atmospheric dust loading (Lambert et al., 2008), volcanic eruptions (Sigl et al., 2014), and biomass burning (Ferretti et al., 2005).

The drilling site for the WAIS Divide ice core (79.48°S, 112.11°W; 1766 m above sea level) was selected to obtain a precisely dated, high time-resolution ice-core record that would be the Southern Hemisphere equivalent of the deep Greenland ice cores (Greenland Ice-Core Project Members, 1993; NGRIP-Project-Members, 2004; NEEM community members, 2013; Taylor et al., 1993). The relatively high annual snowfall rate of 22 cm ice equivalent per year and the thick ice enable the development of a long annual-layer based timescale.

A previous chronology, WDC06A-7 (WAIS Divide Project Members, 2013), was constructed mainly by interpreting the seasonal variations of the electrical properties of the ice, and for some sections also the ice chemistry (Fig. 1). This chronology, WD2014, supersedes that effort by considering additional, seasonally varying parameters over larger sections. The WD2014 chronology is validated by comparison to the tree-ring based IntCal13 (Reimer et al., 2013) and the U-Th decay based Hulu Cave chronology (Edwards et al., in review), which are absolutely-dated chronologies with small uncertainties. WD2014 extends to 31.2 ka BP (thousands of years before present, with present defined as 1950 C.E.) and provides the WAIS Divide ice core with a timescale that has similar resolution and accuracy to that of the deep Greenland ice cores (e.g., the layer-counted Greenland Ice Core Chronology; GICC05). For ages older than 31.2 ka BP, we are no longer confident that we can identify all the annual layers. Thus below 2850 m, WD2014 is dated by stratigraphic matching of methane as described in the companion paper of Buizert et al. (2015).

2 Methods

2.1 Measurements

The physical characteristics of the ice and the character of the annual layers vary with depth, which results in different datasets and methods being better suited to identify the annual layers at different depths. The following is a discussion of the measurement methods. The measurements relevant to this work and their corresponding effective measurement resolution are listed in Table 1.

Continuous flow chemical measurements

The Desert Research Institute (DRI) Ultra Trace Chemistry Laboratory makes continuous and simultaneous measurement with high depth resolution for many chemical elements, black carbon, dust and water isotopes in ice cores using a black carbon (BC) and trace element continuous flow analysis (BC-TE-CFA) system (McConnell, 2002, 2010; McConnell et al.,

2007; McConnell and Edwards, 2008; McConnell et al., 2014; Pasteris et al., 2014a; Pasteris et al., 2014b). With BC-TE-CFA analyses, longitudinal samples of ice core (cross-sectional area of 3.3 cm x 3.3 cm and ~100 cm long) were melted sequentially with the meltwater stream split into three regions. Meltwater from the innermost ring is used for inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) using two parallel instruments (Element 2; Thermo Scientific), and for BC mass and particle size distribution measurements using a laser-based instrument (SP2; Droplet Measurement Technologies) (Schwarz et al., 2006) coupled to an ultrasonic nebulizer (A5000T; Cetac) (Bisiaux et al., 2012; McConnell et al., 2007). Meltwater from the middle ring is used for traditional continuous flow measurements of nitrate, liquid conductivity, ammonium, and pH (Pasteris et al., 2014b; Pasteris et al., 2012). Analyses of aerosols are complemented by addition of a laser-based particle counter (Abakus; Klotz) into the melt stream that quantifies size-resolved aerosol mass (Ruth et al., 2003). Measurements used in this study are from four analysis campaigns taking place between 2008-2014, with small additions and improvements applied to the analytical setup over this timespan. Modifications, for example, resulted in improved resolution of the insoluble particle concentration data below 2711 m (>28 ka BP) that allowed a joint annual-layer interpretation in combination with the ECM record. About 15% of the core at regularly spaced intervals was rerun using duplicate samples of ice, to provide a check on issues that might adversely influence the data quality over the six-year period that measurements were made.

At ice melt rates of approximately 5 cm min^{-1} , the system achieved a depth resolution for most analytes of approximately 1–2 cm in ice and >2 cm in low-density firn due to larger signal dispersion. High sampling resolution (in combination with high annual snowfall rates) permits detection of annual cycles in impurity data (Table 1; Fig. 1), a prerequisite for precise annual dating of ice core records (Rasmussen et al., 2006; Sigl et al., 2013). The BC-TE-CFA system is well suited for ice samples that are long continuous pieces. Depending on how the instruments were configured, the annual layers had to be thicker than 2.5 cm (dust; resolution approximately 0.5 cm; used below 2711 m depth, see Fig. 1) or 7 cm (all other parameters) to be confidently identified.

Discrete chemical measurements

Between about 577 and 1300 m depth, the ice was brittle due to stress in the ice-air bubble matrix (the brittle ice zone), and the quality of the ice core was reduced. Ice-core sample

quality was rated poorest between 1000 and 1100 m depth corresponding to an age interval of 4.3–4.9 ka BP (Souney et al., 2014). Where sample quality permitted, measurements of trace chemical impurities were performed online with a continuous flow analysis system with ion chromatography detection (CFA-IC) at the Trace Chemistry Ice Core Laboratory at South Dakota State University (Cole-Dai et al., 2006). This technique consists of an ice core melter linked to a group of eight ion chromatographs (four Dionex DX-600 for anion detection, four Dionex ICS-1500 for cation detection, respectively). Longitudinal samples of ice core (cross-sectional area of 3.5 cm x 3.5 cm) were melted sequentially at an ice melt rate of about 2.4 cm/min with the meltwater stream from the inner zone feeding the IC instruments. This analytical technique has previously been applied to various ice cores from Antarctica and Greenland achieving reproducible results in agreement with discrete measurements (Cole-Dai et al., 2009; Cole-Dai et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2012). The CFA-IC setup used for the WD analysis provided major-ion analysis and can resolve annual layers in the brittle ice zone of WD (Table 1; Fig. 1). Where sample quality did not permit use of the online continuous technique (38% of the depth interval), discrete samples were individually decontaminated and analysed using traditional IC techniques (Cole-Dai et al., 2000).

Electrical measurements

Seasonal variations of the ice chemistry influence the electrical conductivity of the ice, which allow electrical measurements to detect annual layering (Hammer, 1980, Taylor et al., 1997). Three types of electrical measurements were employed. In the brittle ice, dielectric profiling (DEP) was used because it is insensitive to close-fitting fractures and the low spatial resolution was not a concern because the annual layers were thicker than 15 cm. For the remainder of the core, two types of electrical conductivity measurements were used, alternating current (AC-ECM) and direct current (DC-ECM). The AC-ECM is primarily controlled by the acidity but also responds to other ions (Moore et al., 1992), and it can identify annual layers thicker than 2 cm. The DC-ECM is controlled by the acidity of the ice. The data quality of the DC-ECM was improved by making multiple measurements along the core, which made it possible to avoid the adverse influence of many fractures in the core. DC-ECM has the highest spatial resolution of all the measurements described here and can identify annual layers that are thicker than 1 cm (Taylor et al., 1997).

¹⁰Be measurements

¹⁰Be concentrations for the WAIS Divide ice core for sections 0-577 and 1191-2453 m depth were measured at UC Berkeley's Space Sciences Laboratory and Purdue's PRIME Laboratory (Woodruff et al., 2013). Sampling resolution varied from 1.9 to 4.2 m, but samples typically represented continuous ice core sections of 3 m length. The time resolution of each sample ranged from 10 to 30 years for the past 12 ka BP. ¹⁰Be/⁹Be ratios of all samples were measured by accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) and normalized to a ¹⁰Be AMS standard (Nishiizumi et al., 2007). ¹⁰Be concentrations in the ice and the ¹⁴C content in tree rings are both influenced by the varying flux of cosmic rays, hence ¹⁰Be measurements provide a link between the ice-core and tree-ring chronologies (Muscheler et al., 2014).

2.2 Seasonality in aerosol deposition

Most of the aerosol records from WAIS Divide show strong seasonal variations due to seasonality in aerosol source strength and transport efficiency, and these seasonal signals can be used to detect annual layers (Banta et al., 2008; Sigl et al., 2013). For example, Southern Hemisphere forest and grass fires usually peak during a confined burning season following the meteorological dry period driven by seasonal insolation changes (Bowman et al., 2009; Schultz et al., 2008; van der Werf et al., 2010), and aerosols emitted by these fires (e.g., black carbon) get transported and deposited on the Antarctic ice sheet (Bisiaux et al., 2012) with peak concentrations in austral autumn.

A typical annual layer at WAIS Divide is characterized by a concentration maximum of biomass burning tracers (e.g., BC, NH₄⁺) in austral autumn, maximum from sea-salt deposition (e.g., Na, Cl) during austral winter, and a maximum of marine biogenic aerosol emission tracers (e.g., S, Br) in late austral summer (Fig. 2). Dominant sources, absolute concentrations, and relative timing of deposition of the various aerosols are, however, not stationary through time (Fischer et al., 2007; Wolff et al., 2010). Concentrations and fluxes of Ca, Mg, and insoluble particles, for example, are low during the Holocene and are dominated by a sea-salt source (indicated by co-deposited Na and Cl), whereas during the Antarctic Cold Reversal (ACR) (Fig. 2) and during the glacial (Fig. 3) concentrations and fluxes at WAIS Divide are often higher by an order of magnitude and dominated by continental dust sources (as indicated by co-deposited dust tracers such as V, Cr, and Ce). In contrast, BC concentrations at WAIS Divide are driven by a constant single source – natural forest and savannah fires in the southern hemisphere – but Holocene concentrations are more than twice as large as during the late glacial period (Fig. 2).

Some aerosol (e.g., non-sea-salt sulfur, nssS) and electrical measurements have pronounced seasonal cycles that are occasionally obscured by acids from volcanic eruptions. A multi-parameter approach to the interpretation of annual layers can reduce the challenges of correctly identifying layering in such sections where the seasonal signal in one parameter is overprinted by influx caused by an abnormal event.

2.3 Interpretation of individual layers

The chemical and electrical measurements discussed above contain a record of annual layers. To develop the depth-age relationship for the core, three different methods were used to identify the annual layers and thereby determine the age of the ice. Manual interpretation of the data was done by multiple individuals to identify the individual layers. This method is labour intensive, subjective, and can be prone to both short-term and long-term inconsistencies (Alley et al., 1997; Muscheler et al., 2014; Sigl et al., 2015). Given the flexibility of a manual approach, manual interpretation may nonetheless be the best method for interpreting time periods with an irregular or weak expression of the seasonal cycle (see Supplementary Information, Figs. S1, S2). Two computer algorithms were also used to identify the annual layers. The StratiCounter algorithm (downloadable from <https://github.com/maiwinstrup/StratiCounter>) uses methods from Hidden Markov Models (HMM) and is adapted from machine speech recognition methods (Winstrup et al., 2012; Winstrup 2015). The second method uses selection curves (McGwire et al., 2011), followed by manual adjustments in infrequent irregular sections. Both methods mimic the thought process of a human making a manual interpretation. The computer algorithms require less effort and can provide a more objective interpretation (Sigl et al., 2015). They are, however, better suited for time periods with a consistent and clear annual signal. The computer algorithms are less subjective than the manual method, but when the layering becomes difficult to interpret (e.g. during the ACR), the algorithms have to be adjusted to produce acceptable results, and these adjustments are also subjective.

The StratiCounter algorithm uses its inferred layering to optimize the layer description as function of depth, resulting in relatively few adjustable parameters. The two main input to the StratiCounter runs were a) selection of depth interval for initializing the algorithm based on a preliminary set of manual layer counts, this providing the general pattern of seasonal influx of the various chemical species, and b) decision on whether the percentage-wise variability of layer thicknesses should be allowed to change freely with depth. The algorithm was initialized

1 using representative sections for the different climate periods (Supplementary Information
2 Tabel S1). For the upper part, the data contained sufficient information that the algorithm
3 performed well when self-selecting all parameters used for modelling the layer shapes. For
4 the deepest part (2711-2800 m), however, it was necessary to prescribe the percentage-wise
5 variability of individual layer thicknesses.

6 Examples of typical WAIS Divide aerosol records for various depth intervals are presented in
7 Figs. 4-7. Typically, the minimum values of Na, or the maximum values of ECM, nssSO_4^{2-} , or
8 nssS/Na were used to identify austral summer (nominal January) in the impurity records. The
9 timing of the maximum values of these impurity records was, however, not constant through
10 time, and therefore not exactly the same between the different subsections (Figs. 2-3).

11 The methods used to identify the annual layers changed with depth because the characteristics
12 of the annual signal changed with time, the quality of the ice changed with depth, and the
13 annual layer thickness decreased with depth due to ice flow. However, in contrast to the
14 Greenland deep cores, most of these changes took place relatively slowly with depth, which
15 facilitated consistent layer counting. The following is a description of the interpretation
16 methods used in different depth intervals.

17 **Section 0–577 m (0–2,345 a BP).** In this section the high quality of the ice and thick annual
18 layers (>15 cm) favoured the use of the DRI continuous flow measurements. The previous
19 WDC06A-7 timescale was suspected of being in error by 7 years for ages older than 700 CE
20 because of a consistent delay of tree-ring-based surface temperature cooling events with
21 respect to ice-core based volcanic forcing (Baillie, 2008; Baillie and McAneney, 2015). We
22 revised the dating of the upper 577 m of the WAIS Divide core by applying the StratiCounter
23 algorithm (Winstrup et al., 2012) using 6 records of Na, nssS , nssS/Na , Sr, BC, and Br. The
24 algorithm was used between 188 m (corresponding to the depth of the Samalas 1257 CE
25 volcanic ice-core sulfur signal) and 577 m depth. The layer-detection algorithm used all 6
26 parameters in parallel for the layer interpretation, and thus produced a multi-parameter
27 timescale based on these (Sigl et al., 2015). The annual layers were generally very clear,
28 allowing the algorithm to be run autonomously and without any added constraint; manual re-
29 interpretation of the layer counts was not required.

30 **Section 577–1300 m (2,345–6,009 a BP; brittle ice zone).** For the brittle ice, where drilling
31 fluids may have penetrated the ice through internal cracks, it is more difficult to obtain
32 undisturbed and uncontaminated high-resolution chemistry records. The fractures precluded

1 using the DRI continuous flow chemistry system and measurements were instead made at
2 South Dakota State University. Ice with many fractures was measured with discrete samples
3 while ice with few fractures was measured using continuous flow analysis (Cole-Dai et al.,
4 2006).

5 Manual interpretation of annual layers was performed with non-sea-salt sulfate (nssSO_4^{2-}) as
6 the primary parameter, and using Na^+ and NO_3^- as secondary parameters (Fig. 4). When
7 establishing WDC06A-7 (WAIS Divide Project Members, 2013), the independent DEP data
8 set was used, with the annual layers initially identified with the selection curve algorithm
9 (McGwire et al., 2011) subsequently manually verified or rejected. An initial reconciliation
10 by one interpreter of the multi-parameter chemistry and DEP was performed. This
11 interpretation was re-examined once the tendency for the ECM to overcount was discovered
12 by comparison to the multi-parameter measurements (WAIS Divide Project Members, 2013)
13 and after the comparison of ^{10}Be and ^{14}C showed the interpretation to have more years than
14 the tree ring timescale (see section 3.1). A consensus decision was then obtained by two
15 investigators using both data sets. The **StratiCounter algorithm was not run for this interval,**
16 because the character of the data (i.e., discrete vs. continuous measurements) is frequently
17 changing. This is the first time annual layers have been identified in chemistry data through
18 the brittle ice zone, which occurs in all deep ice cores.

19 **Section 1300–1940 m (6,009–11,362 a BP).** Below 1300 m core quality was excellent and
20 we used records obtained by the DRI continuous flow system. The average layer thickness
21 remained above 10 cm and the annual cycles were well resolved in all parameters (Fig. 5).
22 The primary aerosol records used were BC, nssS, Na, and nssS/Na. The aerosols were
23 interpreted both manually and with the StratiCounter algorithm. Any differences between the
24 manual, StratiCounter, and ECM interpretations were investigated by three interpreters and a
25 consensus was reached. We outline in the Supplementary Information (Figs. S1, S2) two
26 specific case studies (Holocene vs. Late Glacial) in which we describe in detail how
27 consensus was reached on the basis of the three individual layer interpretations resulting from
28 the three different interpretation methods.

29 **Section 1940–2020 m (11,362–12,146 a BP).** For this interval, a multi-parameter (aerosol
30 and ECM) interpretation had already been performed for the WDC06A-7 timescale to confirm
31 the observed sharp rise in annual layer thickness (WAIS Divide Project Members, 2013). To
32 estimate the reliability of the layer counting, the StratiCounter algorithm was also run on this

interval using the multi-parameter aerosol data set (Table 2) which re-confirmed this rise in layer thicknesses. The WD2014 interpretation is unchanged from WDC06A-7 since it was based on the larger data set of both ECM and aerosol records.

Section 2020–2300 (12,147–15,302). The average annual-layer thickness during this interval was less than 10 cm (Fig. 8), making it more difficult to confidently identify all annual layers using the DRI continuous aerosol data (Fig. 6). The ECM retained sufficient measurement resolution. Thus, the interpretation relied upon the ECM records more than at shallower depths. The StratiCounter algorithm was only run to 2274 m depth, because we noticed that the number of annual layers detected by the StratiCounter started to slowly drift away from the other two interpretations (Table 2) which we believe to be an artefact arising from the lower data resolution below 2000 m (see Supplementary Information, Fig. S2).

Section 2300–2711 m (15,302–26,872 a BP). In this depth interval, the aerosol records did not have sufficient depth resolution for reliable identification of the annual signal so the annual-layer interpretation is based solely on ECM data. The interpretation was not changed from WDC06A-7 because (a) the ECM interpretation agreed well with the consensus interpretation between 2020 and 2300 m (Table 2), (b) it agreed well with the dust data between 2711 and 2800 m (Table 2), (c) the age comparison in the glacial period (Sect. 3.2) showed no significant bias, and (d) the 1% bias identified during the Holocene is not directly applicable to the full length of the ice core due to the different character of the annual signal in ice from the glacial and glacial-interglacial transition. Although atmospheric dust burden and deposition flux over Antarctica were higher in the Glacial than in the Holocene (Fischer et al., 2007) with short-term dust deposition events noticed to occasionally obscure the ECM signals (Supplementary Information Fig. S2) we, however, notice that the comparable small dust input does not significantly change the shape or seasonality of the ECM signal driven by acidity input. This is best visualized in the opposing maxima of the ECM (austral summer maximum) and dust (austral winter maximum) mean annual cycles during the Glacial (Fig. 3).

The only period of reinterpretation is for 2421.75 and 2427.25m depth corresponding to a period of enhanced acid deposition at WAIS-Divide that forms a distinctive horizon and prominent radar reflector across West Antarctica (Hammer et al., 1997; Jacobel and Welch, 2005). During this approximately 200 year long deposition event, the annual-layer dating was based on dust particle concentrations. The additional measurements were made using a second stick from the main core and a modified analytical setup with increased measurement

1 resolution of the Abakus particle counter. Annual layers in the dust were identified using the
2 automated interpretation from the selection curve algorithm (McGwire et al., 2011) with
3 manual adjustments that included the ECM data during periods without volcanic acid
4 deposition.

5 **Section 2711–2800 m (26,872–29,460 a BP).** In this section of the core, the DRI continuous
6 analytical system was modified to increase the resolution of the particle counter
7 measurements. This allowed insoluble particle concentration data to also be used as an
8 indicator of annual layers between 2711 and 2800 m depth. These data were interpreted with
9 the StratiCounter algorithm, and compared to the interpretation of the ECM based on the
10 selection curve algorithm. The final timescale was mostly found by adopting the previous
11 interpretation of the ECM data, but the particle record with the StratiCounter layer
12 interpretation was used to make manual adjustments when the ECM layer signal was
13 ambiguous.

14 **Section 2800–2850 m (29,460–31,247 a BP).** The annual-layer interpretation was extended
15 using the ECM data past the 2800 m stopping depth of WDC06A-7. Particle concentration
16 data was also interpreted with the StratiCounter algorithm, but the results were deemed
17 unreliable with too few layers being identified, likely due to too low resolution of the record.
18 Layer interpretation in the ECM data below 2850 m became increasingly difficult. This
19 difficulty in interpreting the annual cycles appears to be driven by a lack of amplitude in the
20 annual cycle as well as decreasing layer thickness below 2850 m. Although an annual-layer
21 signal appears to be present in the ECM data in much of the interval from 2850 to 3100 m, we
22 were not confident that all annual layers could be identified and we therefore terminated the
23 annual layer interpretation (see Supplementary Information, Fig. S3).

24 By combining the annual layer counting from the eight depth intervals discussed above we
25 obtained the new annual-layer counted chronology (WD2014) that spans the past 31,247
26 years (BP 1950). The resulting depth-age scale and inferred annual-layer thickness profile are
27 shown in Fig. 8. The layer thicknesses stay above 9 cm down to 2250 m (age: 14,694 years
28 BP), after which depth the layers relatively quickly decrease to a relatively stable level of ~3
29 cm at 2500 m (age: 20,031 years BP). This level is maintained back to 2850 m, where we
30 stopped the layer interpretation. In comparison to the Greenland ice cores, however, which
31 show abrupt changes in layer thickness over this period with large transitions in the climate
32 system, the decrease in layer thicknesses around 14.7 ka BP still takes place very gradually.

2.4 Time scale uncertainty

When establishing ice-core chronologies by annual-layer interpretation, various sources contribute to uncertainty in the resulting timescale (see discussion in Andersen et al. 2006, Rasmussen et al., 2006). Uncertainty can be assigned to two primary causes. First, uncertainty associated with the ability of the ice-core records to preserve the seasonal variations as annual layers. Second, uncertainty associated with correctly interpreting the annual layers preserved in the records.

The uncertainty associated with ability of the ice-core records to preserve the annual signal occurs for several reasons. The primary concern is a season with abnormal weather (e.g. an exceptionally mild winter or short summer) that prevents the robust recording of the seasonal variations. Gaps in the data records due to low ice core quality or failure of the measurement process are negligible and have been minimized by the use of independent measurements and data sets. During multiyear volcanic eruptions the seasonal signal in some chemical and electrical records is compromised, but the black carbon recorded the annual signal because it is only influenced by biomass burning on a hemispheric scale.

The uncertainty associated with the ability to correctly interpret the annual layers occurs because a small percentage of the features in the records can be interpreted in several ways. To overcome this we used records indicative of multiple aspects of the climate system (dust, black carbon from biomass burning, nssS-Na, electrical conductivity), and we used multiple interpretation methods (machine-assisted interpretation and multiple manual interpreters). The vast majority of annual layers were clearly visible in at least one data set, but in some cases multiple interpretations were possible.

It is not possible to rigorously calculate the uncertainty of the depth-age relationship for the WAIS Divide core. Although there are multiple parameters that express the annual signal, and multiple methods to interpret the annual signal, they all rely on an ice sample from the same 12 cm diameter cylinder from the ice sheet. We have higher confidence in depth intervals where all layer interpretations were consistent and layers appeared well resolved by the measurements. We have lower confidence deeper in the core where ice flow has thinned the layers to such extent that they are approaching the ability of the measurements to resolve them. For example, in the upper part of the ice core, all aerosol records showed clear peaks and troughs between neighbouring maxima (Figs. 4, 5; Supplementary Information Fig. S2); in the lower part of the core, layer boundaries were in some aerosol records (e.g., nssS, Na)

occasionally only recognizable by small inflections in the concentration data (Fig. 6; Supplementary Information Fig. S2).

For the Greenland GICC05 timescale, ambiguous layers were identified and used to estimate uncertainty in the annual-layer interpretation. Each “uncertain” annual layer was counted as 0.5 ± 0.5 years, and the half-year uncertainties were summed to determine a “maximum counting error” estimated to represent a 2σ age uncertainty (Andersen et al., 2006; Rasmussen et al., 2006; Svensson et al., 2006). We did not take this approach because: 1) it assumes the ice core records the seasonal variations without any bias towards recording too many or too few layers, 2) it assumes the interpretation errors are equally split between too many and too few years, and 3) classifying the interpretation of specific individual layers as “uncertain” adds another subjective judgement to the interpretation process.

We can determine the reproducibility of the interpretation by comparing manual interpretations made by different people, and by the machine assisted interpretations. This approach cannot be used to rigorously determine the uncertainty of the age-depth relationship because investigators conducting the interpretations influence each other when they discuss their general approach to interpreting layers, and they also determine the rules used in the machine interpretations. Furthermore, this approach only considers the interpretation uncertainties and does not include the uncertainty associated with years that might not be recorded in the core. A comparison of different interpretations is given in Table 2.

From 0-577 m depth, the StratiCounter-based WD2014 ages are younger than the manually derived WDC06A-7 ages by a maximum of 14 years, confirming the existence of a dating bias (Baillie and McAneney, 2015; Sigl et al., 2015) in the previous chronology. In the brittle ice section (577–1300 m), the number of annual layers derived using the multi-parameter aerosol records was 3668, which is 36 years (1%) less than obtained using the DEP record. An initial reconciliation by one interpreter of the multi-parameter and DEP records found a total of 3690 years. After re-examination, the consensus decision resulted in 3664 annual layers, which closely followed the original aerosol interpretation. The StratiCounter algorithm was not run on this data set.

From 1300 to 1940 m, 5368 annual layers were manually identified in the multi-parameter aerosol records, 5323 annual layers were identified by the StratiCounter algorithm on the same data set, and 5396 annual layers were identified with the ECM. The consensus decision resulted in 5353 annual layers, slightly less (0.3%) than the manual aerosol interpretation,

about 0.6% more than the StratiCounter-based interpretation, and about 0.8% less than the ECM-based interpretation.

For the section 1940-2020 m, the multi-parameter (aerosol and ECM) WDC06A-7 interpretation was compared with the StratiCounter interpretation based on the multi-parameter aerosol data set, which had a net difference of 16 fewer years (2%) in the interval. From 2020 to 2274 m, the consensus decision found 2834 years, which was 0.3% less than the manual aerosol interpretation and 0.7% less than the ECM interpretation. The StratiCounter interpretation found a much smaller number of 2645 years (7% less). At these depths, the annual layer thickness is near the resolution limit of the aerosol measurements and thin years were not well resolved. The StratiCounter algorithm seemed to miss the small expression of these layers, especially where volcanic eruptions caused disruptions of the annual layer signal in multiple data series simultaneously. As volcanic peaks tend to obscure the annual signal in subsequent years, this may lead to some annual layers not being counted by StratiCounter.

Between 2200 and 2300 m depth, the total number of annual layers based on manual interpretation from aerosols and ECM agreed within a few years. The aerosol layer interpretation became increasingly difficult, and we stopped interpreting the multi-parameter aerosol records at 2300 m depth.

For the intervals from 2300 m to 2711 m, and between 2800-2850 m, where only the ECM data resolve annual layers, there is no way to test the interpretation repeatability. In sections where only ECM data was available for dating, the duration of volcanic events was dated under the assumption of constant annual-layer thickness, thereby resulting in less confidence in the layer interpretation.

Between 2711-2800 m, improved resolution of the particle concentration data allowed a comparison between layer counts based on the ECM and particle concentration records, respectively. StratiCounter layer counts based on the particle concentration data identified 2649 layers, which was 2% more than the ECM-based counts.

3 Comparison to other time scales

The interpretation repeatability in Table 2 and described above is not a measurement of the accuracy of the chronology over long time periods, since over longer sections, the layer interpretation uncertainties are expected to partially cancel out assuming the absence of any

consistent bias (e.g. Rasmussen et al., 2006). To assess the accuracy of WD2014 we need to compare it to other chronologies with high accuracy and defined uncertainty. We have selected the tree-ring based radiocarbon calibration chronology (Reimer et al., 2013; Friedrich et al., 2004) and the Hulu cave chronology (Edwards et al., in review). The tree ring chronology was selected because it is considered to have virtually no age uncertainty, at least for the well-replicated time interval with high sampling coverage from present to 11.5 ka (Friedrich et al., 2004). For ages older than 25 ka, we use the Hulu cave chronology because the radiometric dating yields small (~100 yr) age uncertainties. We describe the age comparisons to these two records below and then assess the age accuracy for the full WD2014 timescale. We also compare WD2014 to GICC05, but since the GICC05 absolute uncertainties are large and may be underestimated during the Holocene and at the end of the glacial transition (Muscheler et al., 2014; Lohne et al., 2013; 2014), we do not use this comparison to develop estimates of the WD2014 timescale accuracy.

3.1 Comparison to tree-ring chronologies

Solar variability leads to cyclic modulation of the magnetic shielding of the Earth against galactic cosmic rays, resulting in changes in the production rates of the cosmogenic radionuclides ^{14}C and ^{10}Be , which are both produced in the upper atmosphere and incorporated in tree rings and ice cores, respectively. These globally synchronous variations provide a means to compare the timescales of the two proxy series by comparing ice core ^{10}Be records with ^{14}C production rates obtained from tree ring ^{14}C analysis and carbon cycle modelling (e.g. Adolphi et al., 2014; Muscheler et al., 2014). Matching cosmogenic isotope records between proxy archives has a long tradition with numerous applications existing in climate and solar sciences as well as in geochronology (Adolphi et al., 2014; Finkel and Nishiizumi, 1997; Muscheler et al., 2008; Raisbeck et al., 2007; Steinhilber et al., 2012).

The new WD2014 timescale is consistent with independent tree-ring chronologies over the past 2,400 years as demonstrated by ^{10}Be analysis obtained from WAIS Divide (Sigl et al., 2015) for a short-lived cosmic ray anomaly detected in tree rings in 775 C.E. (Miyake et al., 2012). Furthermore, ages for all major volcanic WAIS Divide sulfur signals are within ± 3 years of corresponding signals from a new NEEM ice core chronology over this period and from Northern Hemisphere cooling events as indicated by summer temperature reconstructions from tree rings (Sigl et al., 2015). Given the constraints from historic events, the close correspondence between ages of major volcanic signals as well as events observed

1 in tree-ring data, we estimate the uncertainty envelope to be smaller than ± 5 years for this
2 period.

3 To assess the accuracy of WD2014 prior to 2.4 ka BP, we compared WD2014 to the
4 independent Intcal13 radiocarbon calibration curve (Reimer et al., 2013), which for ages
5 younger than 12 ka BP is based on the fully anchored, absolutely-dated European oak and
6 pine chronologies (Friedrich et al., 2004), which are considered to have no age uncertainty.
7 Therefore, reliable stratigraphic ties between the ice core and the tree ring chronologies can
8 assess the true age confidence of the WD2014 timescale.

9 We compare relative changes in ^{10}Be from WAIS Divide and ^{14}C from tree-rings using a
10 Monte Carlo approach with a moving 2 ka time window to objectively estimate the most
11 likely time shift for synchronization (Muscheler et al., 2014). The method is described by
12 Muscheler et al. (2014) and is summarized here. We applied filters (Muscheler et al., 2014;
13 Vonmoos et al., 2006) to the cosmogenic isotope records to extract only variations on
14 timescales longer than 20 years. To account for systemic carbon cycle influences on the
15 atmospheric ^{14}C concentration, we used a box-diffusion, carbon-cycle model (Oeschger et al.,
16 1975; Siegenthaler, 1983) to reconstruct ^{14}C production rates ($p^{14}\text{C}$) from the tree-ring
17 measurements of atmospheric ^{14}C (Reimer et al., 2013). For ^{10}Be , we assumed an average
18 one-year delay between ^{10}Be production and deposition on the ice sheet and applied a one-
19 year time shift to the ^{10}Be ice-core concentration data. The data were de-trended by dividing
20 the ^{10}Be and ^{14}C time-series by their 500-year low-pass curves, thereby focusing on time
21 periods between 20 to 500 years that show the most prominent longer-term solar cycles.
22 These records were then compared to each other using a 2 ka window at 100-year steps. The
23 data are varied within the range of measurement errors (Monte Carlo approach) and within a
24 time lag of up to +100 and -100 years between WD2014 and Intcal13. The agreement
25 between the radionuclide records is determined using linear regression analysis. The time
26 shift for the best correlation (maximum r^2 value) is considered to represent the most likely
27 time shift (i.e. “best fit”) for synchronization. The estimate of the uncertainty of this solution
28 is derived from the distribution of the best fits from all iterations, since different best fits can
29 be obtained for the different Monte-Carlo realisations (Muscheler et al., 2014). Consistent
30 with a suggested error in the tree-ring chronology prior to 12 ka (Muscheler et al., 2014), our
31 stepwise regression analysis does not retrieve correlations with $r^2 > 0.2$ between WAIS Divide
32 ^{10}Be and Intcal13 ^{14}C prior to 11.2 ka BP. New radiocarbon measurements on tree-rings

encompassing the Younger Dryas are currently being undertaken to further improve the calibration curve (Reimer et al., 2013; Hogg et al., 2013).

Fig. 9 shows the results of the timescale comparison. The upper panel shows de-trended and normalized records for the ice core and tree-ring cosmogenic isotopes for the past 12 ka BP. The lower panel gives the age difference of the timescales (Intcal13 minus WD2014) for the inferred ‘best fit’ and 95% confidence interval derived from the Monte Carlo approach. The close agreement at 6 ka BP is expected because the brittle ice section of WD2014 was re-evaluated after an offset of a couple of decades to the tree-ring data was observed following the initial reconciliation. However, it should be noted that the final WD2014 age at 6 ka BP differs only by four years from the original manual interpretation of the multi-parameter aerosol records (Table 2). The maximum timescale offset is observed at approximately 8 to 9 ka BP when ice-core ages appear to be relatively older by about 15 years. At 11 ka BP, WD2014 ice-core ages are younger than Intcal13 by approximately 10 years (Table 3).

3.2 Comparison to a speleothem chronology

Similar to the cosmogenic radionuclides produced in the atmosphere, methane also has a global signal and can be used to synchronize ice-core records between both hemispheres (Blunier and Brook, 2001; Blunier et al., 2007) and to assess differences in respective age models. Further, East Asian monsoon regions – a major source area of global methane emissions – are tightly linked to rapid temperature variability in the North Atlantic region (Wang et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2005; Pausata et al., 2011). Rapid changes at Dansgaard-Oeschger (DO) events are distinct in both Greenland oxygen isotopes and methane and in the oxygen isotope records of stalagmites that are a proxy for the strength of the East Asian monsoon. The changes in these three parameters are expected to be near-synchronous (Buizert et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2014; Svensson et al., 2008; Svensson et al., 2006) with this assumption based amongst others on the strong coherency of their time series in the high-frequency domain (see Supplementary Information).

Methane synchronization (Buizert et al., 2015) provides a means to independently assess the accuracy of the annual-layer counted WD2014 chronology because some speleothem records, e.g., the Hulu cave in China (Edwards et al., in review; Wang et al., 2001), have very precise age scales (based on U/Th dating). The ice-age gas-age difference (Δage) is relatively small for WD ($\leq 525 \pm 120$ years throughout the WAIS Divide core) because of the high annual

snowfall rates at the site. The uncertainty of the lag of atmospheric CH₄ behind Greenland $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ is on the order of a few decades (Huber et al., 2006, Baumgartner et al., 2014, Rosen et al., 2014), and the total gas-age uncertainty (for ages older than approximately 11 ka BP) is dominated by the cumulative annual-layer interpretation uncertainty (Table 4). The methodology and results of the methane synchronization are described in detail in the companion paper addressing the deeper part of the WD2014 chronology (see also Fig. 5 in Buizert et al., 2015).

Comparing the onset of DO 3, DO 4 and DO 5.1 as determined from the WD2014 gas-age scale and Hulu cave shows that WD2014 is consistently younger than Hulu. The maximum age difference between WD2014 and Hulu is 167 years (0.6% of the age) for the onset of DO 3 (Table 3). The WD2014 ages agree with the Hulu ages to within the combined Hulu age uncertainty and the WAIS Divide gas-age uncertainty (Buizert et al., 2015). The age difference between WD2014 and Hulu is much less than the cumulative uncertainty in identifying annual layers in WD2014.

3.3 Age Accuracy

As described above, Table 3 shows the comparison of WD2014 to these records at times when we are able to confidently make a stratigraphic link to either the tree ring ^{14}C record or the Hulu cave $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ record. The age confidence is more difficult to determine when there are no age comparisons. This encompasses large portions of the timescale: the brittle ice zone (2.4 ka to 5.5 ka BP) and the glacial-interglacial transition to the last glacial maximum (11 ka to 27 ka BP). Considering the interpretation repeatability (Table 2) and the comparison to the tree-ring chronology (Fig. 9), we recommend considering the ages in WD2014 to be accurate to better than 0.5% in the Holocene (to 11 ka), and having even higher precision (± 5 years) during the last 2,500 years. Without any comparisons for the next 16,000 year interval, estimating the age accuracy is difficult. The comparisons with the Hulu Cave chronology indicate that the oldest part of the WD2014 annual timescale is accurate to within 1% of the age which is also supported by using an alternative precisely-dated cave record (Luetscher et al., 2015) from the European Alps (Supplementary Information, Fig. S4, Table S2). We suggest using a 1% age confidence for the timescale older than 14.5 ka. Between 11 and 14.5 ka, the age confidence is likely better than 1% because there has been a limited number of

years since 11 ka to accumulate uncertainty. Therefore, we linearly increase the age confidence from ± 55 years at 11 ka to ± 145 years at 14.5 ka.

We recognize that is not a rigorous determination of uncertainty; however, it is the best that can be done with the information that is available now or in the foreseeable future. We assumed our errors to be random, mostly because we could avoid large systematic errors by using independent information where possible taking advantage of the multiple different aerosol records (see Supplementary Information Figs. S1, S2 for details). The assumption of random interpretation errors seems valid at least over the Holocene as demonstrated by the comparable small mean ice-core/tree-ring age-offset varying around zero (Fig. 9). We note that the uncertainty in the duration between two climate events is not the difference between the age accuracy of the two climate events. The age accuracy decreases slowly on the assumption that uncertainties in the annual layer count will tend to cancel. Therefore, for short intervals, the uncertainty in the duration is better estimated by the interpretation repeatability and we suggest to use 1% during the Holocene and 2% during the Glacial.

3.4 Comparison to the Greenland ice core chronology GICC05

Here we summarize the observed age differences as derived from the methane synchronization to the GICC05 $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ chronology for rapid climate transitions within the annual-layer counted part of the WD2014 chronology (Table 4). The abrupt climate changes observed in the NGRIP $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ record and leading to global methane rise (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Buizert et al., 2015) are clearly expressed during the onset of the Younger Dryas/Holocene warming, Bølling/Allerød warming, and DO 3, DO 4, and DO 5.1 while the termination of the inter-stadials appears more gradually (Buizert et al., 2015; NGRIP-Project-Members, 2004; Wang et al., 2001).

The absolute calendar ages for the Bølling/Allerød warming and the Preboreal warming are slightly younger on WD2014 than GICC05 (Figure 10) but agree within the GICC05 uncertainty. A dating correction of approximately 70 years for GICC05 for the early Holocene has recently been independently proposed based on synchronizing the GRIP ^{10}Be record to the Intcal13 radiocarbon chronology (Muscheler et al., 2014) and by matching of distinctive tephra horizons between Greenland ice cores and radiocarbon-dated lake sediments from Kråkenes Lake, Norway (Lohne et al., 2013, 2014). WD2014 is older than GICC05 at DO 3 by 52 years at DO 4 by 198 years and by 24 years at DO 5.1 (Fig. 10; Table 4). The

terminations of the DO events are all older on WD2014 than GICC05 by 49 years at DO3, 174 years at DO4, and 72 years at DO 5.1.

We can also compare the duration of intervals although this is more challenging due to uncertainties in the feature matching; the Δ age and feature matching uncertainties are on the order of 100 years during the DO events. However, the Δ age uncertainty is likely biased in the same way for events at similar times (i.e. if the temperature reconstruction is too cold for DO3 it is likely too cold for DO4 as well leading to a Δ age that is too large for both events) such that much of it may cancel when calculating the duration. Therefore, while we calculate the duration differences in Table 5, we recognize that more precise matching of the timescales must be done (e.g., using volcanic synchronization) before definitive differences between the timescales can be ascertained.

A potential concern of the WD2014 timescale is that annual layers might be systematically missed near the end of the timescale due to small layer thicknesses and decreasing amplitude of the seasonal cycles. To check whether this occurred, we compared the length of the intervals using the DO3, DO4, and DO5.1 tie points. For the entire interval from DO3 to DO 5.1, WD2014 has a very similar number of years to GICC05, 27 (1%) fewer. The duration in the Hulu record is also quite similar with WD2014 finding 22 (1%) more years. This is a strong indication that the WD2014 is not consistently biased and years are not being skipped. However, the difference between WD2014 and GICC05 was much greater for the two shorter intervals between DO3 to DO4 and DO4 to DO5.1: WD2014 finds 146 (13%) more years than GICC05 in the interval between DO3 and DO4. Between DO4 and DO5.1, WD2014 finds 173 (9%) fewer years than GICC05. These differences are large enough that they are unlikely to be fully explained by Δ age and matching uncertainties and likely originate, at least partially, in the underlying annual layer interpretations. It is not currently possible to diagnose these differences in detail. We note that the WD2014 durations differ by 4% and 1% from the Hulu durations for these shorter intervals.

4 Conclusion

WD2014 is the first multi-parameter, annual-layer based timescale extending into the last glacial for an Antarctic ice core. This was possible due to (1) the high annual snowfall rates present at the drill site, (2) the small amount of layer thinning due to the thick ice and basal melting and (3) use of the most recent analytical techniques. The data included for the first time measurements of black carbon, a unique biomass-burning tracer with strong intra-annual

1 emission variability arising from an insolation-driven annual biomass burning cycle in the
2 Southern Hemisphere. Annual layers were continuously identified through the brittle ice zone
3 using chemistry, which has not been done before, and with DEP. This allowed a continuous
4 timescale to be developed without needing to match sections of multiple ice cores.

5 The age accuracy, as deduced by comparisons with absolutely dated timescales, is much
6 better than the interpretation repeatability. The age accuracy for the Holocene (11 ka and
7 younger) is estimated to be better than 0.5% of the age; the age accuracy is estimated to
8 increase to 1% for ages older than 14.5 ka BP. WD2014 can become a reference chronology
9 for Antarctic ice core records and the Southern Hemisphere equivalent of the Greenland
10 GICC05 chronology. Synchronization between ice cores can be achieved using the WAIS
11 Divide sulfur record of volcanic events, which does not require using the gas timescale and
12 Δ age calculations, as demonstrated for the past 2,000 years where 25 ice core records from
13 Antarctica were synchronized to WAIS Divide (Sigl et al., 2014). Sulfate records are
14 available for other deep ice-core records from East Antarctica including Vostok (Parrenin et
15 al., 2012), Talos Dome (Severi et al., 2012), the EPICA cores from Dronning Maud Land, and
16 Dome C (Severi et al., 2007).

17 Future synchronization of these records to WD2014 offers the possibility of new insights into
18 the spatial pattern of climate variability and potential leads and lags in the climate system
19 between West and East Antarctica. Similar to how the GICC05 ice chronology is being
20 integrated into a developing stratigraphic framework of marine and terrestrial climate proxies
21 in the North Atlantic region (Blockley et al., 2012; Lowe et al., 2008; Rasmussen et al.,
22 2014), WD2014 will help support development of a framework of southern hemisphere
23 climate proxies from marine and terrestrial proxy archives (Alloway et al., 2007; Petherick et
24 al., 2013). Synchronization with many of these climate records from the southern hemisphere
25 seems feasible using WAIS Divide ^{10}Be during the Holocene (Fig. 9), or by using dust tracers
26 (e.g., Ca) during the LGM, a method recently applied to marine records of iceberg-rafted
27 debris to link into an ice core chronology from Antarctica (Weber et al., 2014). With a
28 growing number of high-resolution southern hemisphere climate proxies from such a
29 developing network (including those obtained directly from WAIS Divide) on an accurate
30 common timescale, we will gain a better understanding of climate forcing, mechanisms, and
31 feedbacks driving the worldwide transition from ice age climates to the present climate and
32 their impact on ice sheets and global sea-level.

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1 Table 1. Data used in the construction of the WD2014 ice core chronology.

Depth interval (m)	Analytical technique	Species ^a	Estimated effective resolution (mm)
0–577	BC-TE-CFA	Na, S, Sr, BC, Br	10–20
577–1300	CFA-IC/ IC	Na ⁺ , SO ₄ ²⁻ , NO ₃ ⁻	25
	DEP	H ⁺ (and others)	5
1300–2300	BC-TE-CFA	Na, S, Sr, BC, Br, NH ₄ ⁺ , Mg	10–20
	ECM	H ⁺	2
2300–2712	ECM	H ⁺	2
	(BC-TE-CFA) ^b	insoluble particle count	5
2712–2850	ECM	H ⁺	2
	BC-TE-CFA	insoluble particle count	5

2 ^a displayed are only species used for annual-layer dating

3 ^b the section between 2421 and 2427 m characterized by enhanced acid deposition (17.8 ka event) was annually layer dated
4 using the insoluble particle count obtained from a reanalysis of a secondary longitudinal ice core section performed at the
5 Desert Research Institute with an improved analytical setup of the BC-TE-CFA similar to that for the ice core sections below
6 2712 m.
7

Table 2. Constructing the WD2014 ice core chronology: Annual-layer interpretation results using various data and interpretation techniques.

Depth interval (m)			0-577	577-1300	1300-1940	1940-2020 ^a	2020-2274	2274-2300	2300-2711	2711-2800	2800-2850
Bottom age (Yr BP 1950)			2345	6009	11362	12146	14980	15302	26872	29460	31247
Mean annual layer thickness λ (cm)			24.0	19.7	12.0	10.2	9.0	8.1	3.6	3.4	2.8
Interpretation method											
Consensus decision			2402	3664	5353	784	2834	322	11570	2588	1787
Number annual layers (rel. to WD2014)	I	ECM Selection curve	N/A	3704	5396	N/A	2855	322	11567	2585	N/A
				+40	+43		+21	0	-3	-3	
				(1.1%)	(0.8%)		(0.7%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(-0.1%)	
	II	Aerosols Manual	2415	3668	5368	N/A	2843	321	N/A	N/A	N/A
			+13	+4	+15		+9	-1			
			(0.5%)	(0.1%)	(0.3%)		(0.3%)	(-0.3%)			
	III	Aerosols StratiCounter	2402 ^b	N/A	5323	768	2645	N/A	N/A	2649 ^c	N/A
			0		-30	-16	-189			+61	
			(0%)		(-0.6%)	(-2.0%)	(-6.7%)			(+2.4%)	

N/A ice core section was not annually dated with the respective dating method/data

a. The depth interval from 1940 to 2020 m was originally interpreted by using the combined aerosol and ECM data sets (WAIS Divide Project Members, 2013)

b. The StratiCounter algorithm was run starting from 188 m depth (1256 CE), with the uppermost part of the WDC06A-7 timescale being adopted as is.

c. This section is based only on particle concentration data from the aerosol data set.

Table 3. Comparison of the WD2014 ice core chronology to independent chronologies Hulu cave (Wang et al., 2011; Buizert et al., 2015; Edwards et al., in review) and tree-ring based IntCal13 radiocarbon curve (Reimer et al., 2013). A detailed description and discussion for the WAIS Divide Δ age estimation and synchronization procedures between the WAIS Divide CH₄ record Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{Calcite}}$ record is provided by Buizert et al. (2015).

Climate event or comparison point	Age in WD2014	Comparison record	Age in comparison record (yr BP 1950)	age difference (%) between records
8.5 ka (WAIS Divide offset older maximum)	8500	Intcal13	8516	16 years (0.2%)
10.5 ka (WD offset younger maximum)	10500	Intcal13	10490	10 years (0.1%)
Onset of DO3	27755	Hulu	27922 \pm 95	167 years (0.6%)
Onset of DO4	29011	Hulu	29134 \pm 92	123 years (0.4%)
Onset of DO5.1	30730	Hulu	30876 \pm 255	146 years (0.5%)

Table 4. Comparison to the independent ice-core chronology GICC05 from NGRIP (Andersen et al., 2006; Rasmussen et al., 2006; Svensson et al., 2006). To calculate from WD2014 ages for rapid climate transitions (transition ages; bold) in Greenland (i.e. $\delta^{18}\text{O}$) we use a Greenland- CH_4 phasing of 50 ± 30 years for the YD/ PB transition, 45 ± 30 years for the OD/BA transition and a phasing 25 ± 30 years for all other transitions (Rosen et al., 2014; Buizert et al., 2015). A detailed description and discussion for the WAIS Divide Δage estimation and synchronization procedures between the WAIS Divide CH_4 record and NGRIP $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ is provided by Buizert et al. (2015) and in Supplementary Information.


Climate transition	WAIS Divide (WD2014)				NGRIP (GICC05)	
	Depth	Ice age	Gas age	 Transition age	Depth	Ice age $\pm 2\sigma$
	(m)	(yr BP 1950)	(yr BP 1950)	(yr BP 1950)	(m)	(yr BP 1950)
YD-PB	1983.02	11740 ± 74	11545 ± 78	11595 ± 90	1490.89	11619 ± 98
BA-YD	2096.61	12987 ± 106	12769 ± 111	12794 ± 127	1524.20	12775 ± 136
OD-BA	2259.40	14804 ± 148	14576 ± 151	14621 ± 157	1604.05	14628 ± 185
DO 3 (termination)	2747.25	27905 ± 279	27521 ± 293	27546 ± 297	1861.90	27498 ± 822
DO 3 (onset)	2755.74	28144 ± 281	27755 ± 295	27780 ± 297	1869.00	27728 ± 832
DO 4 (termination)	2787.99	29091 ± 291	28697 ± 304	28722 ± 312	1882.60	28548 ± 887
DO 4 (onset)	2797.92	29396 ± 294	29011 ± 306	29036 ± 308	1891.27	28838 ± 898
DO 5.1 (termination)	2845.37	31067 ± 311	30618 ± 328	30643 ± 334	1916.50	30571 ± 1010
DO 5.1 (onset)	2848.38	31186 ± 312	30730 ± 329	30755 ± 331	1919.48	30731 ± 1023

Table 5. Comparison of interval durations between WD2014, GICC05 (NGRIP-Project-Members, 2004) and Hulu cave (Edwards et al., in review) chronologies. Years of difference are given as reference – WD2014. We use a Greenland-CH₄ phasing of 50 ± 30 years for the Younger Dryas (YD) to Preboreal (PB) transition, 45 ± 30 years for the Older Dryas (OD) to Bølling-Allerød (BA) transition and a phasing 25 ± 30 years for all other transitions (Rosen et al., 2014; Buizert et al., 2015). We assume no age difference between Hulu and CH₄ during the transition of DO 5.1, DO 4 and DO 3.

	WD2014	GICC05	Hulu
YD/PB to BA/YD	1199	1156	N/A
		-43 (-4%)	N/A
BA/YD to OD/BA	1827	1853	N/A
		26 (1%)	
DO3 to DO4	1256	1110	1212
		-146 (-12%)	-44 (-4%)
DO4 to DO5.1	1720	1893	1742
		173 (10%)	23 (1%)
DO3 to DO5.1	2976	3003	2954
		27 (0.9%)	-21 (-0.7%)

N/A = not analyzed

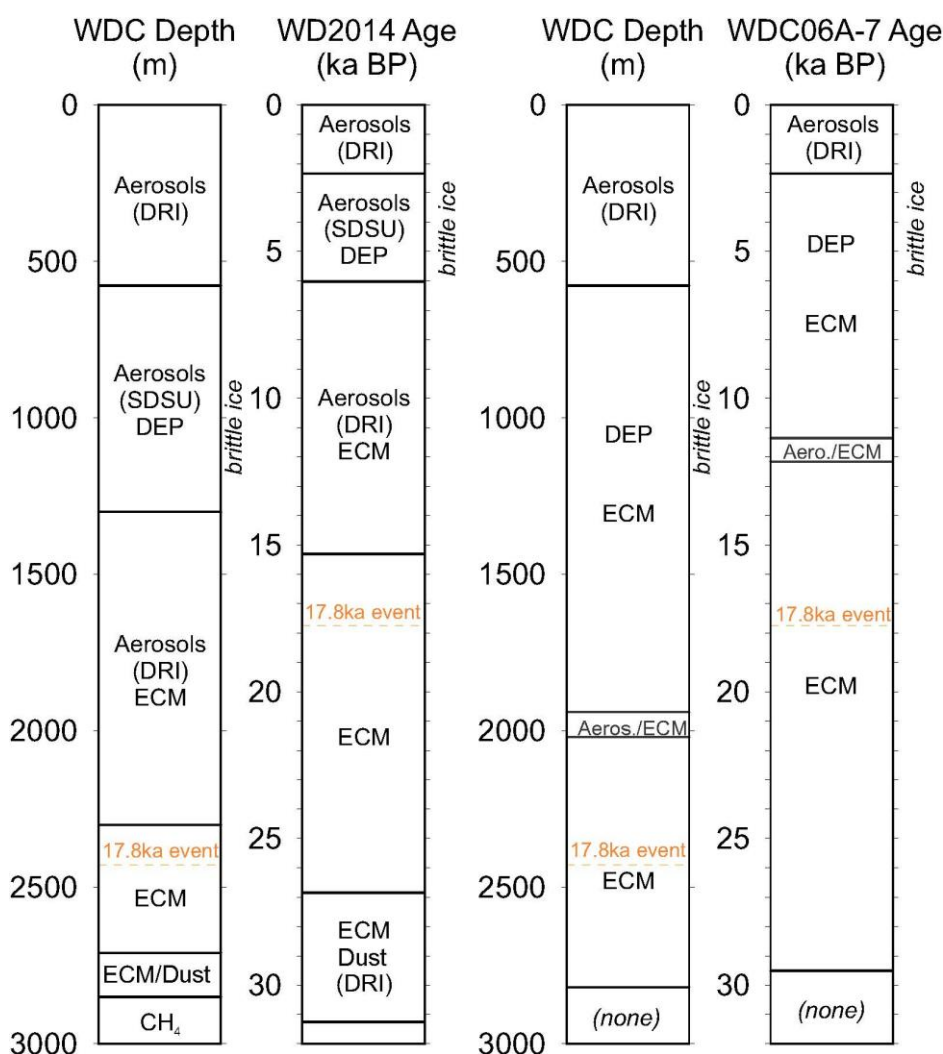


Figure 1. Overview of the data sets used for development of WAIS-Divide annual-layer dating chronologies. (Left): Depth and age information for the WAIS Divide aerosol records obtained at the Desert Research Institute (DRI) and South Dakota State University (SDSU), and ECM/DEP data used to establish the new WD2014 chronology. (Right): Data sets used for development of the previous WDC06A-7 chronology. Also shown is the position of the acidity anomaly (17.8 ka event), a major chrono-stratigraphic age marker across West Antarctica (Hammer et al., 1997; Jacobel & Welch, 2005). Aerosol data below 2300 m (>15 ka BP) is from insoluble particle measurements (i.e., dust) only.

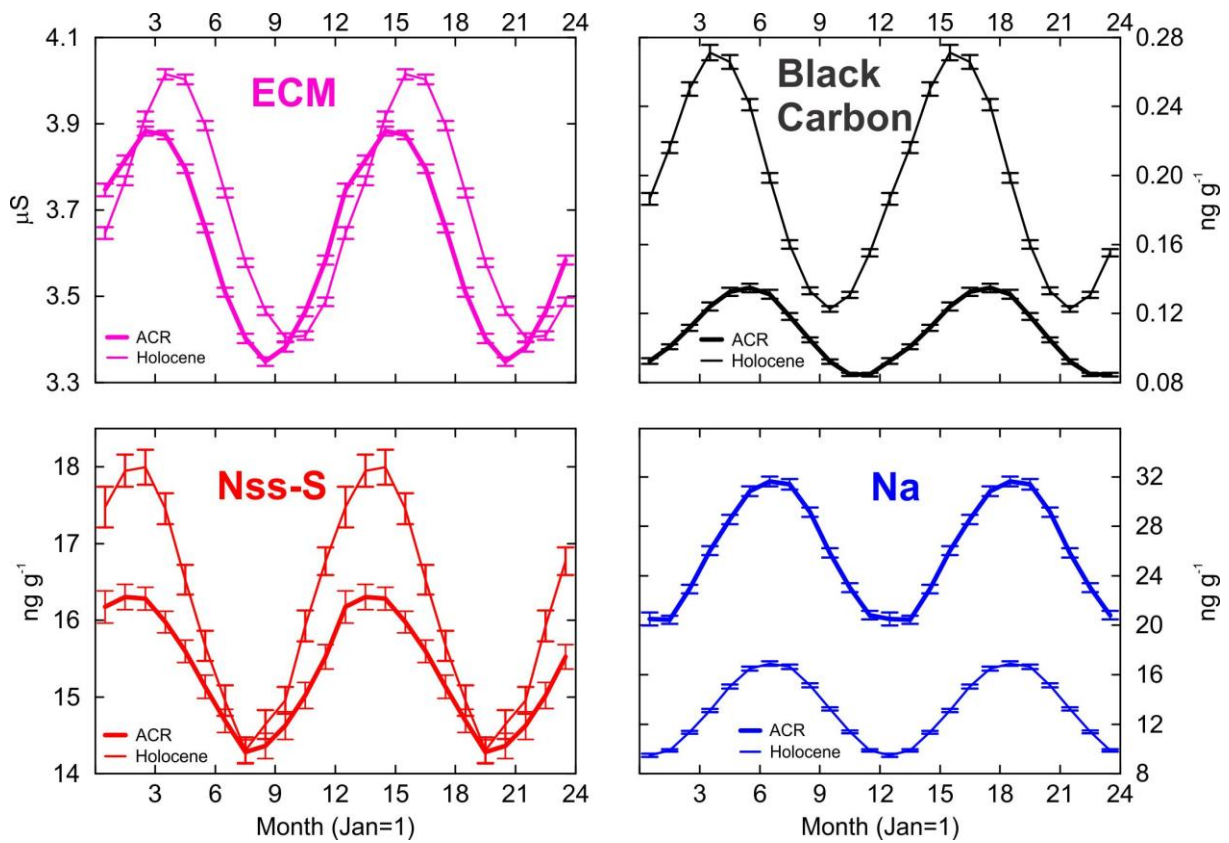


Figure 2. Average annual cycle computed for WAIS Divide ECM record and aerosol records of Na, nssS, and BC for a 1,000 year period centered over the early Holocene (10–11 ka BP, thin line) and Antarctic Cold Reversal (ACR) (13–14 ka BP, bold line), respectively. Shown are average monthly values for two complete annual cycles assuming constant snowfall distribution throughout the year. The month zero is equivalent to the position of our annual layer boundaries (nominal January first), broadly consistent with the minimum in [Na]. Uncertainty bars are 1σ standard error of the mean. Average WAIS Divide annual-layer thickness for the investigated time intervals is $10.0 \pm 1.6\ cm\ a^{-1}$ (Holocene) and $9.2 \pm 1.4\ cm\ a^{-1}$ (ACR), respectively.

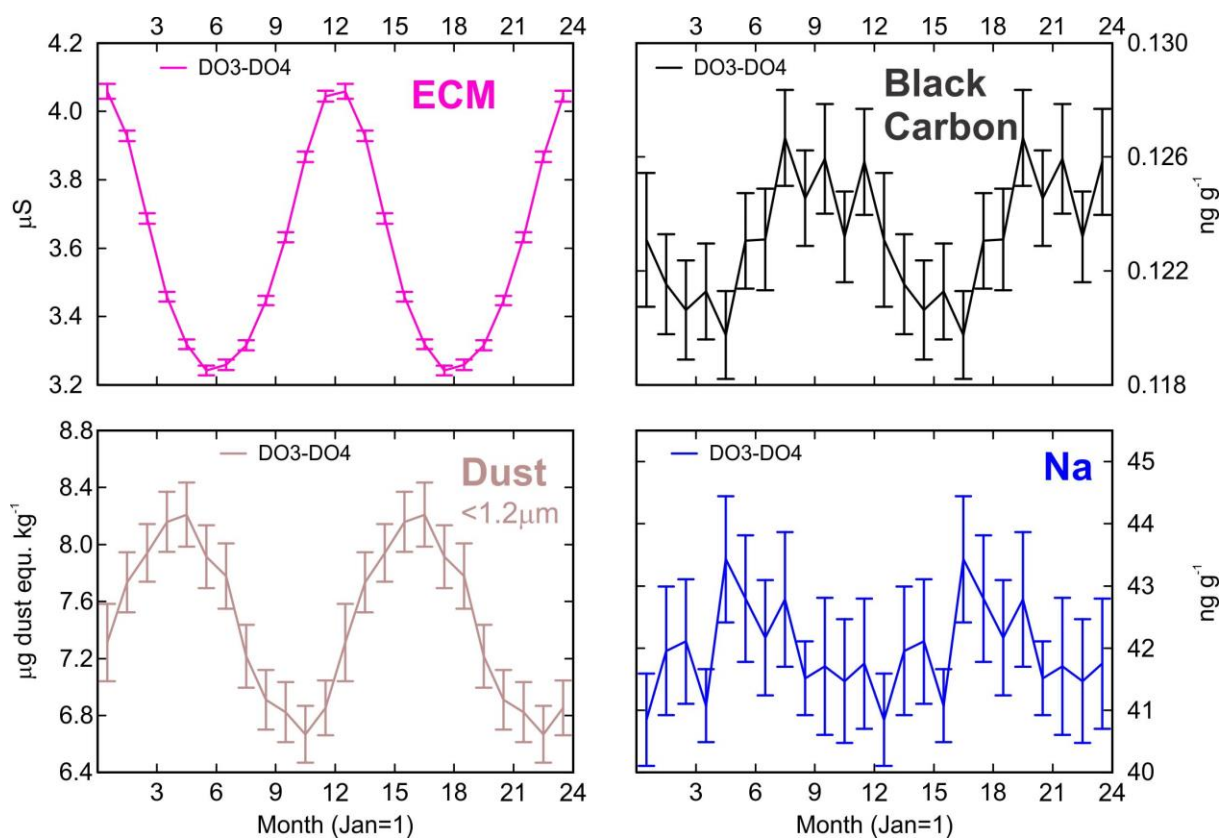


Figure 3. Average annual cycles for WAIS Divide aerosol records similar to Fig. 2, but for a 1,250 year period between the onset of Dansgaard/Oeschger (DO) events 3 and 4 (i.e., 28.1–29.4 ka BP), as determined from the WAIS Divide CH_4 record (Buizert et al., 2015). Shown are average monthly values for two complete annual cycles (January = month 1) assuming constant snowfall distribution throughout the year. Uncertainty bars are 1σ standard error of the mean. Average WAIS Divide annual layer thickness for this interval is $3.4 \pm 0.7 \text{ cm a}^{-1}$.

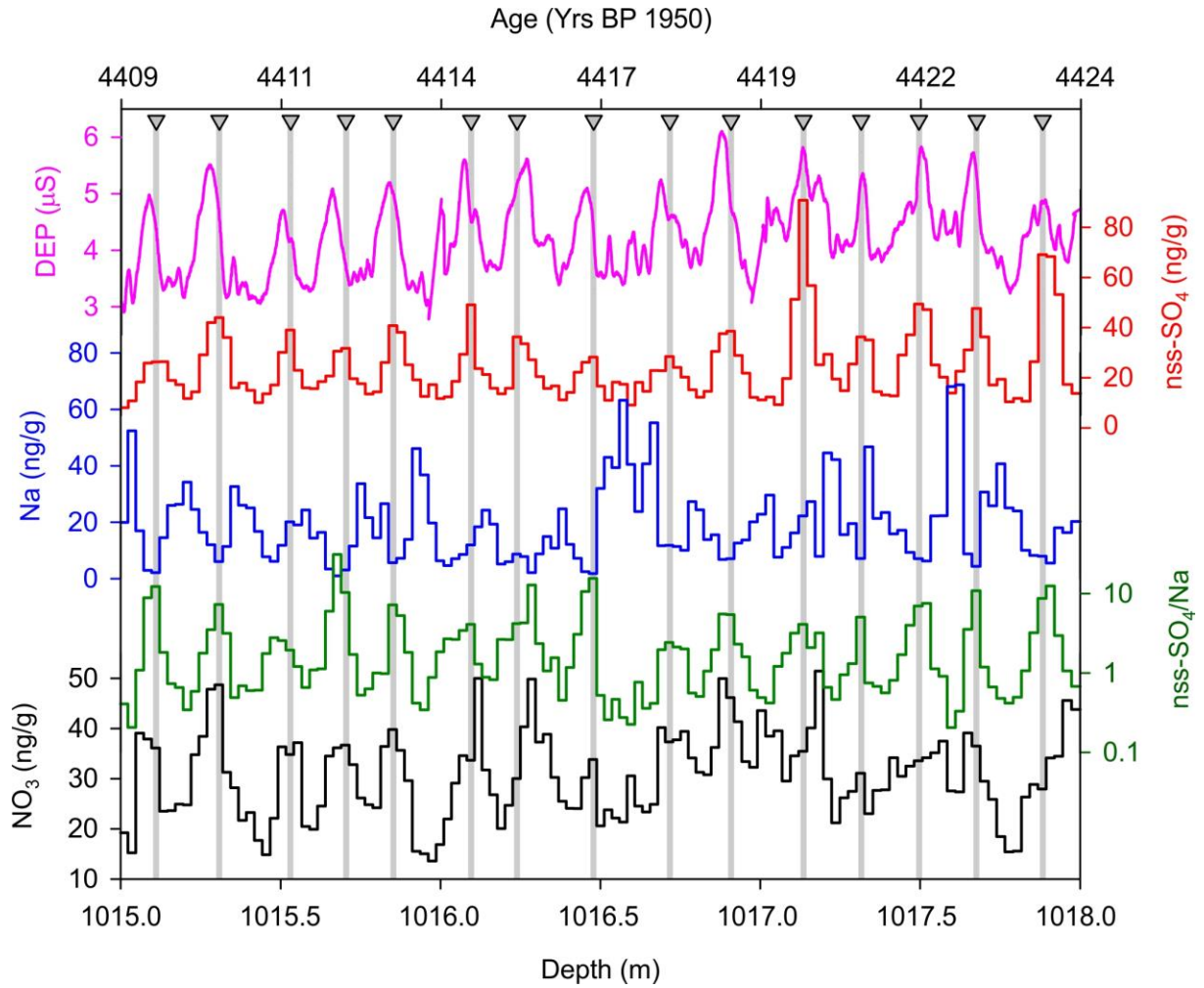


Figure 4. Example of a 3 m long ice core section within the WAIS Divide brittle ice zone (approximately 4,400 years BP), a section for which ice core sample quality was rated poorest (Souney et al., 2014). WD2014 annual-layer markers (triangles with grey lines) are indicated. Annual layers are identified by summer and winter tracers: Winters are characterized by maxima in $[\text{Na}^+]$, summers are characterized by maxima in $[\text{NO}_3^-]$, $[\text{nss-SO}_4^{2-}]$ and corresponding DEP maxima, Also shown is the ratio of $[\text{nss-SO}_4^{2-}]/[\text{Na}^+]$.

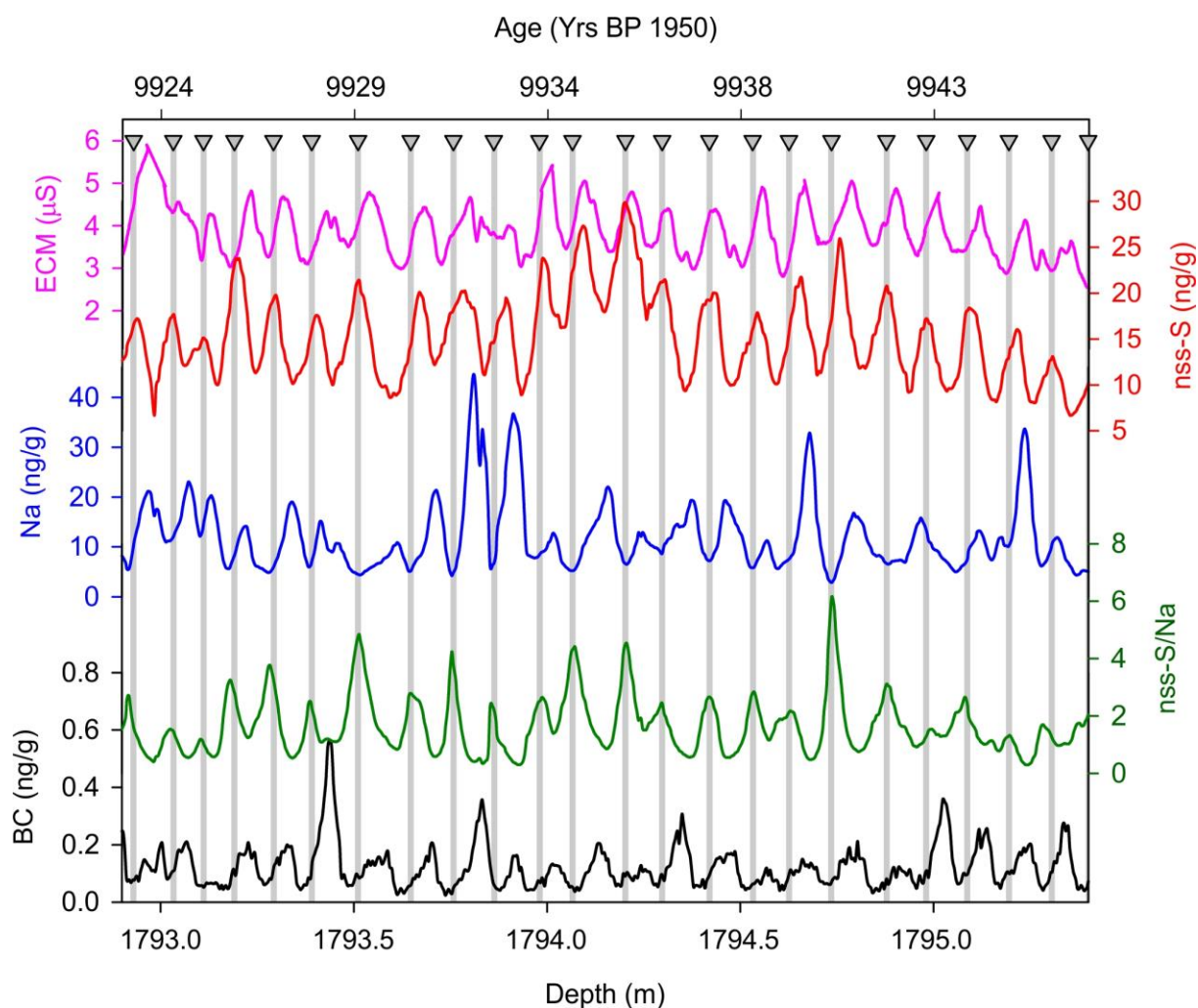


Figure 5. Example of a 2.5 m long ice core section of WAIS Divide (approximately 9,900 years BP) with annual-layer markers (triangles with grey lines) indicated. Annual layers are here identified by matching pairs of winter, spring, and summer tracers. Summers are characterized by maxima in [nss-S] and corresponding ECM maxima; autumn is indicated by maxima in [BC] from biomass burning, whereas the [Na] records show maxima in winter. Also shown is the ratio of [nss-S]/[Na].

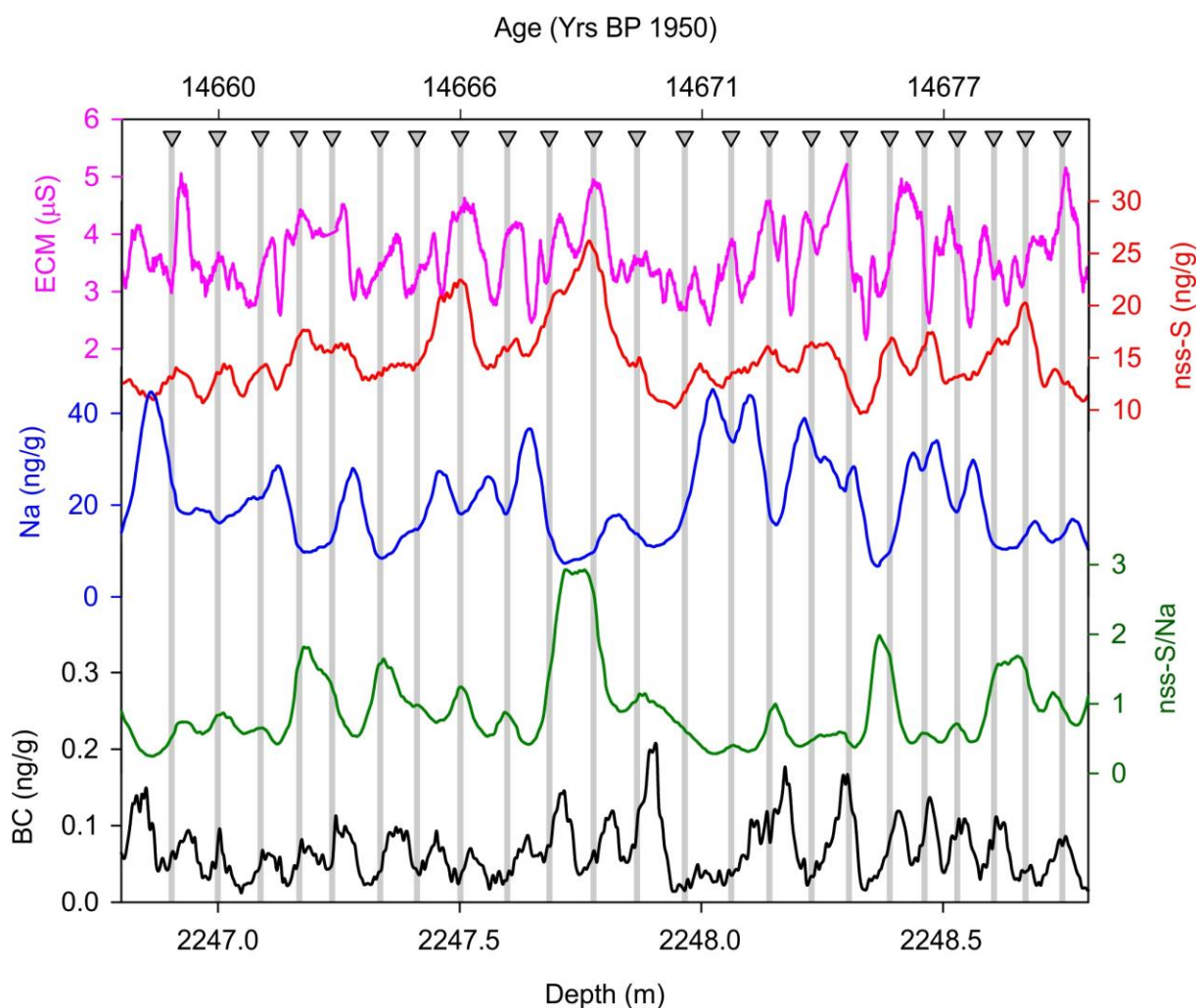


Figure 6. Example of a 2 m long ice core section of WAIS Divide (approximately 14,700 years BP) with annual-layer markers (triangles with grey lines) indicated. Similar to Fig. 5, annual layers are identified by matching pairs of winter, spring, and summer tracers. [Na] and [nss-S], determined by ICPMS, do not always show clear annual cycles in this section with an average layer thickness of 8 cm a^{-1} thus limiting their use for annual-layer dating in the deeper part of WAIS Divide. Annual layers are identified here using the autumn maxima in [BC] and the summer maxima in the ECM record, respectively.

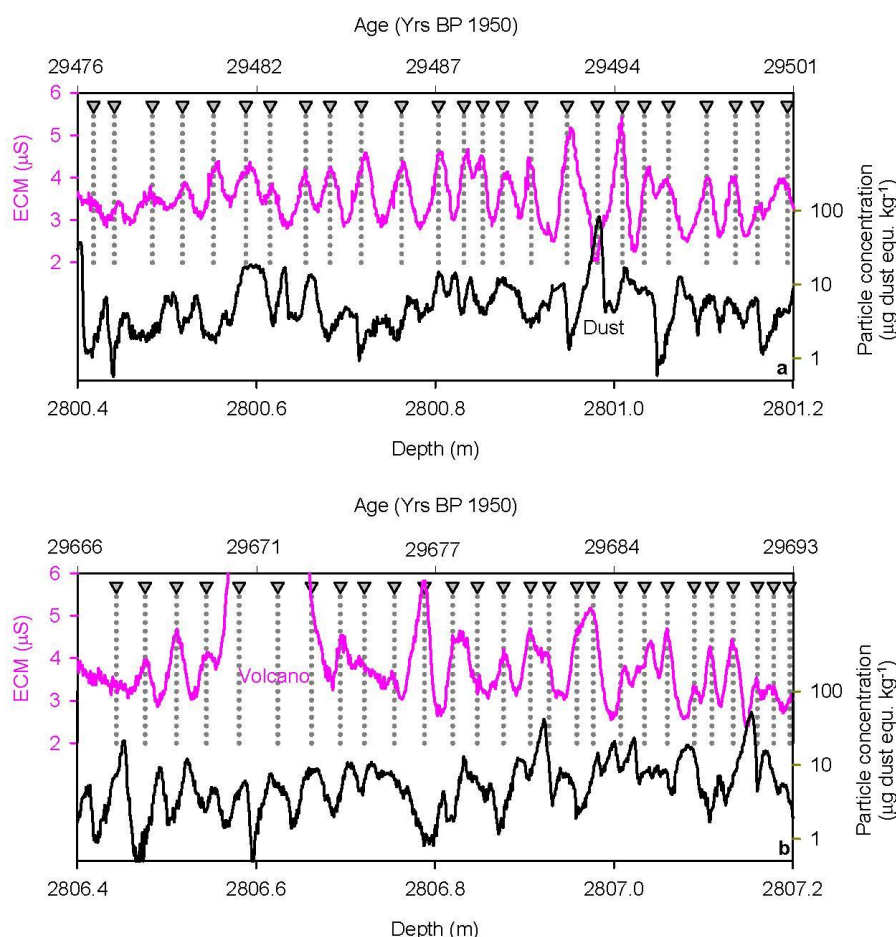


Figure 7. Example of two 0.8 m long ice core sections of WD from (a) approximately 29,500 and (b) 29,700 years BP 1950, respectively, with annual-layer markers indicated. Annual layers are here identified by matching pairs of winter and summer tracers. Summers are characterized by ECM maxima. Winters are indicated by maxima in dust deposition derived from the WD insoluble particle concentration record using the particle size range $<1.2 \mu\text{m}$ typical for dust transported over large distances. Dust concentrations are shown on a logarithmic scale. Also shown is an example (2801 m) of how dust input can mask annual cycles in the ECM record by neutralizing acids present in the snowpack that usually are responsible for the annual cycle observed in electrical properties in the ice (a). The insoluble dust record provides confident and independent information on annual layering at WAIS Divide, also in the presence of acidity excursions caused by large volcanic eruptions as indicated by a four-year long period of increased acidity content centred at 2806.6 m depth (b).

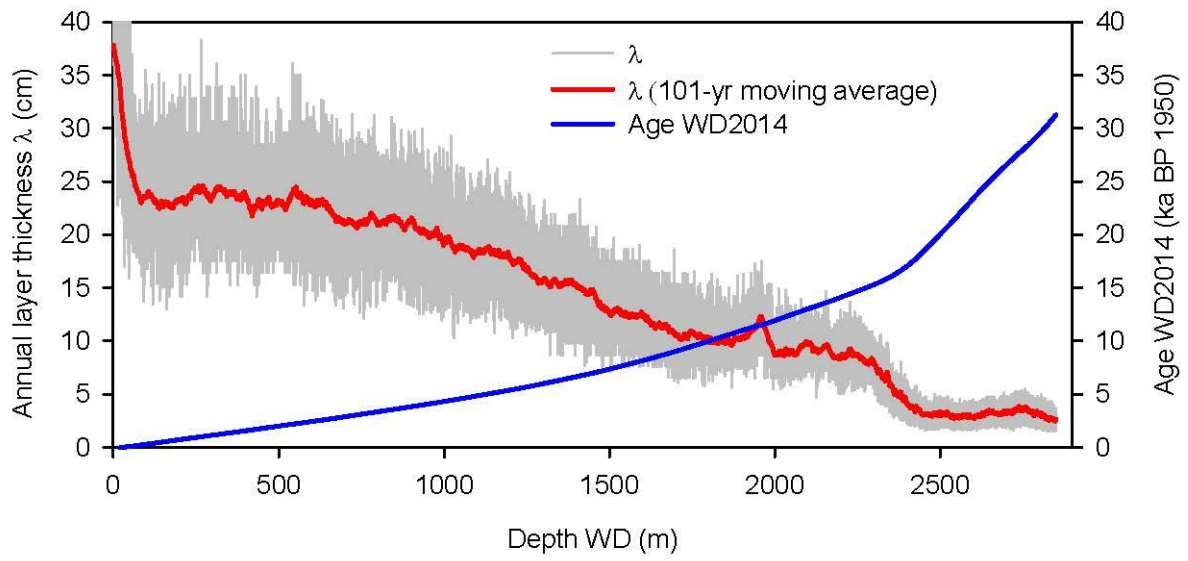
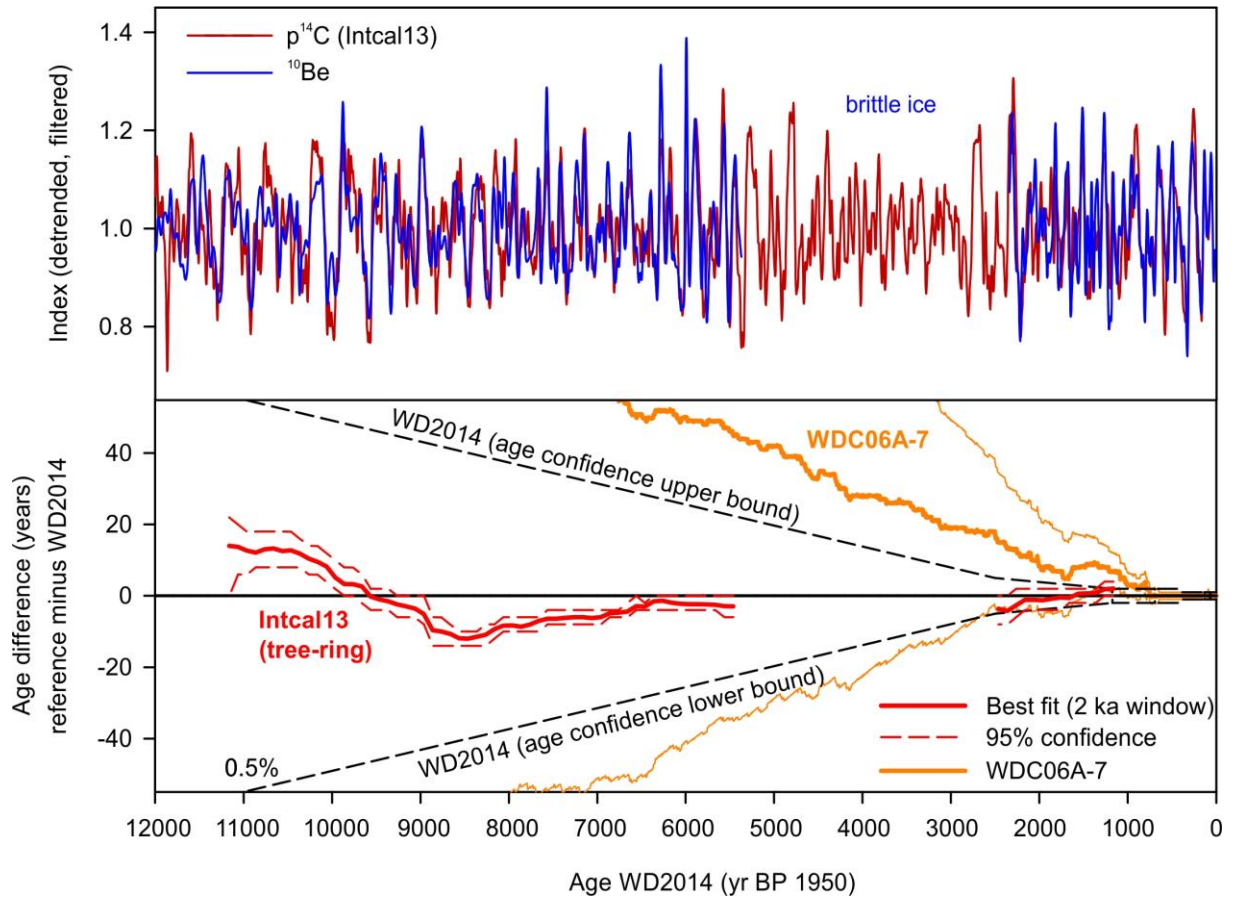
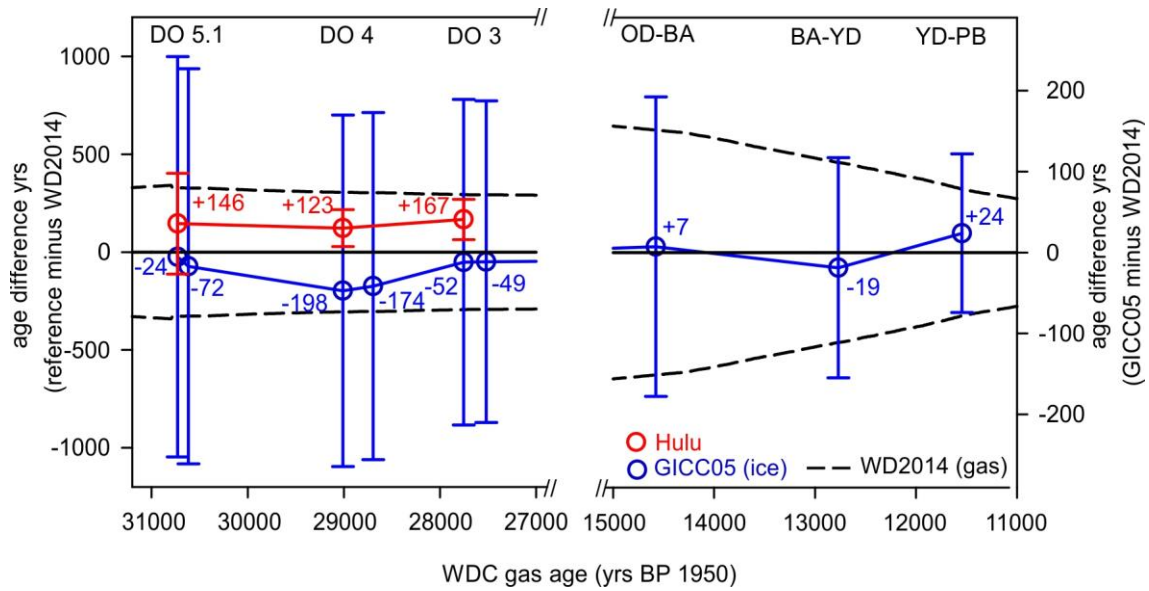


Figure 8. Depth-age profile for WAIS Divide and evolution of the annual-layer thickness (λ) for the annual-layer- dated part of the WD2014 chronology.



1
 2 Figure 9. Comparison to the independent chronology Intcal13. (Upper panel): Filtered ^{10}Be
 3 (blue) and ^{14}C (red) data on their respective timescales. (Lower panel): Most likely time shift
 4 (red line) for the highly significant correlations together with the 2σ uncertainty range
 5 inferred from the r^2 distribution. Results are superimposed on a WD2014 age uncertainty
 6 envelope using an absolute age uncertainty of 0.5% over most of the Holocene. For the most
 7 recent 2,500 years we estimate the uncertainty envelope to be smaller than ± 5 years (Sigl et
 8 al., 2015). Also shown is the difference between the WAIS-Divide chronologies (WDC06A-7
 9 minus WD2014) indicating consistent younger ages for WD2014. Ice corresponding to the
 10 age interval 2.5-5.4 ka BP has not been sampled for ^{10}Be .



1
2 Figure 10. Comparison between WD2014 and two independently-dated records from the
3 Northern Hemisphere. Age differences are shown between WD2014 and GICC05 (NGRIP-
4 Project-Members, 2004) and between WD2014 and Hulu cave (Wang et al., 2001; Buizert et
5 al., 2015; Edwards et al., in review) using CH₄ synchronization for time periods of rapid
6 climate transition (i.e., NGRIP $\delta^{18}\text{O}$, Hulu $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{calcite}}$) between 31 and 27 ka BP (left panel)
7 and between 15 and 11 ka BP (right panel). We use a Greenland-CH₄ phasing of 50 ± 30
8 years for the YD/ PB transition, 45 ± 30 years for the OD/BA transition and a phasing 25 ± 30
9 years for all other transitions (Rosen et al., 2014; Buizert et al., 2015). We assume no age
10 difference between Hulu and CH₄ during the transition of DO 5.1, DO 4 and DO 3. Note the
11 different scaling of the respective y-axis for the two time periods. A positive value means that
12 the reference record is older than WD2014. Error bars represent 2σ age uncertainties of the
13 reference chronologies. Also shown are gas-age uncertainties (black dashed line) for WD2014
14 (Buizert et al., 2015).