Evidence of solid Earth influence on stability of the marine-terminating Puget Lobe of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet

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Key Points:

- Solid Earth uplift is capable of stabilizing marine-terminating ice streams and seen in stratigraphy across the Puget Lowland.
- The Puget Lobe of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet was present in the Puget Lowland until at least 12,100 calendar years before present.
- A newly developed marine reservoir for the Puget Lowland is found to be 264 ^{14}C years or 50 calendar years before present.

Abstract

Understanding drivers of marine-terminating ice sheet behavior is important for constraining ice contributions to global sea-level rise. In part, the stability of marine-terminating ice is influenced by solid-Earth conditions at the grounded-ice margin. While the Cordilleran Ice Sheet (CIS) contributed significantly to global mean sea level during its final post-Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) collapse, the drivers and patterns of retreat are not well constrained. Coastal outcrops in the deglaciated Puget Lowland of Washington state - largely below sea level during glacial maxima, then uplifted above sea level via glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) - record late Pleistocene history of the CIS. The preservation of LGM glacial and post-LGM deglacial sediments provides a unique opportunity to assess variability in marine ice-sheet behavior of the southernmost CIS. Based on paired stratigraphic and geochronological work with a newly developed marine-reservoir correction for this region, we identify that the late-stage CIS experienced stepwise retreat into a marine environment about 12,000 years before present, placing glacial ice in the region for about 3,000 years longer than previously thought. Stand-still of marine-terminating ice for a millenia, paired with rapid vertical landscape evolution, was followed by continued retreat of ice in a subaerial environment. These results suggest rapid rates of solid Earth uplift and topographic support (e.g., grounding-zone wedges) stabilized the ice-margin, supporting final subaerial ice retreat. This work leads to a better understanding of shallow marine and coastal ice sheet retreat; relevant to sectors of the contemporary Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets and marine-terminating outlet glaciers.

Plain Language Summary

Glaciers that deposit ice directly into the ocean are capable of losing large amounts of ice that contribute to global sea level rise. The surface that glaciers sit on can influence how quickly ice is lost to the ocean. Vertical movement of solid Earth, as a result of large ice losses, is capable of stopping glacial retreat in an ocean environment. Records of the interaction between Earth and glacial ice movement are contained in the sediments along the coast of the Puget Lowland in Washington state. This work finds that glacial ice in the Puget Lowland, from 20,000 years ago, was present in the area about 3,000 years longer than previously thought. We also interpret that solid Earth movement provided stability to this marine-terminating glacial ice for about 1,000 years. These results are significant because this landscape is similar to parts of the Greenland Ice Sheet and the Antarctic Peninsula, indicating that the interactions seen in this area are applicable to modern glaciated regions.

1 Introduction

The terrain and substrate geology beneath ice sheets have the potential to affect the behavior of the overriding ice; they can influence ice flow organization, velocity, and margin positions (Weertman, 1974; Clarke et al., 1977; Clark, 1994; Whillans & van der Veen, 1997; Cuffey & Paterson, 2010; Jamieson et al., 2012; Margold et al., 2015). Coupled ice sheet and solid Earth models indicate that glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) can stabilize marine-based grounding lines (van der Wal et al., 2015; Whitehouse et al., 2019; Wan et al., 2022) but this relationship has yet to be tested empirically. Due to the difficulty in observing subglacial conditions and solid Earth dynamics beneath modern ice sheets, we turn to the deglacial sediment record of the extinct Cordilleran Ice Sheet (CIS) in the Puget Lowland. Specifically, we consider the marine-based southernmost part of the CIS, the Puget Lobe, which most recently advanced across the Puget Lowland during the Last Glacial Maximum (~20,000 years ago; Mullineaux et al., 1965; Easterbrook et al., 1967; Easterbrook, 1969; Porter & Swanson, 1998). The Puget Lowland records vertical land change due to tectonics and glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) from Puget Lobe advance and retreat in the region, making it an ideal location to study influence of solid Earth on ice-sheet behavior and post-glacial landscape evolution. Topographic similarities between the Puget Lowland and Greenland indicate the deglacial history of the Puget Lobe may be an appropriate analog for studying contemporary Greenland Ice Sheet outlet glaciers (Eyles et al., 2018). Additionally, the ice histories and solid Earth properties, such as flexural thickness of the lithosphere and mantle viscosity, in this region are similar to that of the Antarctic Peninsula (Nield et al., 2014; Whitehouse et al., 2019). Contributing to understanding the role of topography and solid-Earth conditions on marine-based glacial ice can lead to development of a process-based model on marine-terminating retreat of modern ice sheets. The findings from this work are relevant to modern glacial systems and have implications for timing of CIS contribution to global sea level as well as routes and timing of human migration into the Americas (Mandryk et al., 2001; Goebel et al., 2011; Lesnek et al., 2018).

1.1 Regional Context

The Puget Lowland of Washington state has been glaciated at least six times throughout the Quaternary as a result of CIS advance and retreat in the region. Glaciations occurred during marine isotope stage (MIS) 6 (~97,000 to 150,000 years ago; Easterbrook, 1969), MIS 4 (80,000 ± 20,000 years; Easterbrook et al., 1967; Easterbrook. 1969), and towards the end of MIS 2 (~17,500 cal. year BP; Mullineaux et al., 1965; Porter & Swanson, 1998). Existing geochronology places final deglaciation of the Puget Lowland around 16,500 calendar years before present (cal. yr. B.P.) (Easterbrook, 1992; Dethier et al., 1995; Swanson & Caffee, 2001). Yet, the lack of detailed stratigraphic context for age constraints and absence of a local marine reservoir correction (MRC) have left uncertainties in the exact timing of ice retreat. Nonetheless, based on similarities in previously published radiometric ages, it is suggested that marine incursion drove rapid lift-off and northward retreat of the Puget Lobe (Thorson, 1980, 1981; Waitt and Thorson, 1983; Booth, 1987; Booth et al., 2003). However, there are variable records of deglacial stratigraphy across the region (Powell, 1980; Pessl et al., 1981; Domack, 1984; Demet et al., 2019), and the presence of ice-marginal landforms indicate periodic stand-still in ice margin during retreat (Simkins et al., 2017; Demet et al., 2019). Subsequently, the need to clarify spatiotemporal details of ice retreat patterns and drivers of Puget Lobe retreat persists.

The magnitude of landscape emergence due to GIA in the Puget Lowland may have been as high as 10 cm a^{-1} during early deglaciation (Dethier et al., 1995), likely due to the elastic solid-Earth response to unloading (c.f. Whitehouse, 2018). This rate of GIAinduced uplift suggests relative sea-level fall in the Puget Lowland outpaced rapid global sea-level rise, leading to emergence of the landscape from below to above sea level during the end of the LGM (Shugar et al., 2014; Yokoyama & Purcell, 2021). Both pre-existing topography and GIA could have periodically stabilized the Puget Lobe during retreat, as suggested for contemporary ice sheets (Durand et al., 2011; Favier et al., 2016; Alley et al., 2021; Robel et al., 2022), highlighting the importance of elucidating the role of both conditions on ice-sheet behavior.

1.2 Relevance to solid Earth dynamics and modern ice sheets and glaciers

Based on modelled evidence of GIA control on ice behavior in analogous Antarctic Peninsula glacial catchments (Nield et al., 2014; Whitehouse et al., 2019), in addition to previously identified geomorphic evidence of ice-margin stand still in the Puget Lowland (Simkins et al., 2017; Demet et al., 2019), we hypothesize that landscape position above and below sea level, due to loading and unloading of the solid Earth, influenced ice-margin positions and led to punctuated retreat of the CIS during the late Pleistocene. In the central Puget Lowland, Whidbey Island spans nearly 100 kilometers in distance along the North-South direction of glacial ice movement and hosts extensive coastal bluff features (Figure 1B). The outcrops, composed of glacial and interglacial sediments, preserve details of ice advance and retreat across the formerly marine landscape, as well as landscape transitions that took place coeval with deglaciation. Except for localized tectonic deformation of surficial sediments (Sherrod et al., 2008), local LGM and subsequent deglacial deposits appear to have little post-depositional reworking (Booth & Hallet, 1993; Kovanen & Slaymaker, 2004; Eyles et al., 2018; Demet et al., 2019; McKenzie et al., 2023).

In this work, decimeter-scale stratigraphic and sedimentological assessments are complemented by accelerator mass spectrometry radiocarbon (^{14}C) and optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating. While these two dating methods have been utilized in this region for decades (e.g., Rigg and Gould, 1957; Leopold et al., 1982; Easterbrook, 1992; Anundsen et al., 1994; Dethier et al., 1995; Swanson and Caffee, 2001), our hypothesis of the relationship and timing of landscape emergence in relation to ice retreat and periodic stabilization of ice retreat has not been directly assessed. Therefore, the application of advances in geochronology paired with a high-resolution stratigraphic assessment of Whidbey Island is a novel approach to elucidating the ice retreat and land emergence across the region.

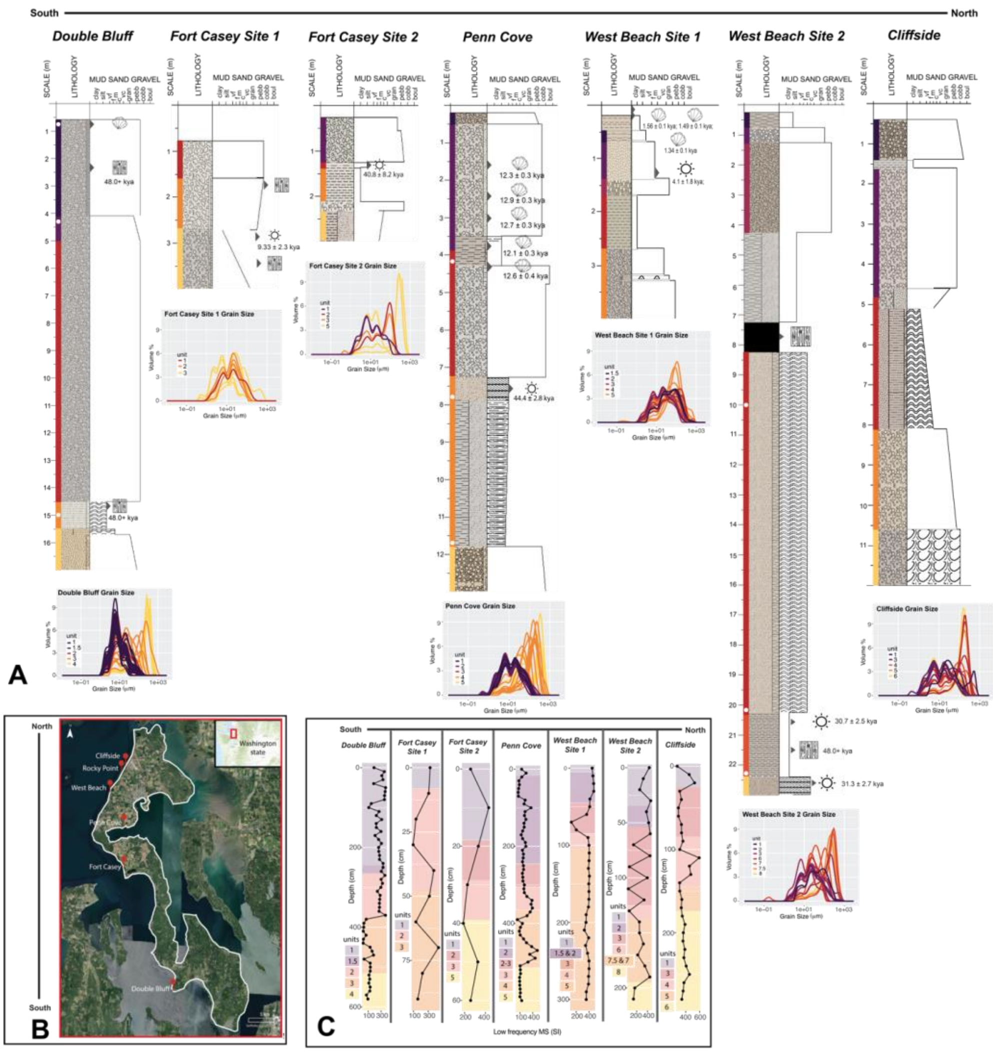


Figure 1. A) Outcrop sites from south to north: Double Bluff, Fort Casey 1, Fort Casey 2, Penn Cove, West Beach Site 1, West Beach Site 2, and Cliffside represented by stratigraphic column with collected radiocarbon and OSL and grain size data below. Colors alongside stratigraphic units indicate gran size measurement correlations. White dots indicate changes to site collection of samples. B) Regional inset map with sites labelled south to north . C) Magnetic susceptibility values for each site, listed south to north, and colored boxes indicate stratigraphic unit correlations to values.

1.3 Contextualization of Outcrop Research in the Puget Lowland

Over the last six decades, this region has been studied with multiple approaches, varying resolutions, and differing classification methods. Therefore, to provide continuity between our analysis and prior work on final glacial-ice occupation and post-glacial landscape evolution in the Puget Lowland, we provide a summary of stratigraphic units thought to record pre-LGM, LGM, and post-LGM deglaciation and landscape evolution in supplement text (Test S1).

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Sedimentology and stratigraphy

Samples were collected from Whidbey Island outcrops a) Double Bluff, b) Fort Casey, c) Penn Cove, d) West Beach, and e) Cliffside at 10-cm intervals (Figure 1B; Table S1) with additional subsamples collected from units with laminations, lenses, or rip-up clasts. Thin (~ <0.5cm thick) horizontally continuous layers are referred to as laminations, while less continuous layers that pinch out are referred to as a lens (e.g., Figure S1). Over 300 discrete bulk sediment samples were analyzed at the University of Virginia for grain size and magnetic susceptibility (MS). An additional 15 peat, wood, and marine shell samples were excavated for radiocarbon dating. Grain size analyses were conducted via a BetterSize S3 Plus Particle analyzer on sample matrix material (material ≤ 3 mm) and MS measurements were collected with a Bartington MS2 magnetic susceptibility meter. MS values provide information about amount and size of magnetic grains in each sample, elucidating continuity and source of biogenic and lithogenic deposits (Thompson and Oldfield, 1986; Verosub and Roberts, 1995; Rosenbaum, 2005; Hatfield et al., 2017; Reilly et al., 2019). Results of the Whidbey Island stratigraphy are presented according to latitudinal location, starting with the southernmost site, Double Bluff, followed by the Fort Casey Sites, Penn Cove, West Beach sites, and ending with the northernmost Cliffside and Rocky Point sites.

2.2 Accelerator Mass Spectrometry radiocarbon analysis

Assuming a constant cosmically produced ^{14}C to ^{12}C ratio, the variation in this ratio can be used to determine the amount of time since the death of formerly living specimens. Samples were run at the National Oceanographic Sciences Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (NOSAMS) Laboratory at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. The unprocessed wood material underwent a series of six to eight acid-base-acid leaches to remove contamination and inorganic carbon prior to combustion. The carbonate shell samples underwent carbonate hydrolysis and resulting carbon combustion reacted with Fe catalyst along vacuum-sealed lines to produce graphite (Goehring et al., 2019). Resulting graphite pellets were pressed into targets and analyzed by accelerator mass spectrometry in addition to standard and processing blanks (Roberts et al., 2019). The AMS measurements determined the ratio of ^{14}C to ^{12}C in each of the pellets, which was then used to calculate the radiocarbon age using the Libby ^{14}C half-life of 5,568 years (Stuiver and Polach, 1977; Stuiver, 1980).

Conversion of radiocarbon years to calendar years BP was conducted using the Int20 curve for terrestrial carbon samples and the Marine20 curve for marine shell samples using the Calib 8.2 interface (Heaton et al., 2020). Marine20 is the baseline marine curve used for Calib 8.2 and is the most up-to-date, internationally agreed marine radiocarbon age calibration curve for non-polar global-average marine records (Heaton et al., 2020). A marine reservoir correction was calculated in Calib 8.2 and applied to all carbonate shell samples using contemporary shells with known pre-1955 (i.e., prior to nuclear bomb testing) collected dates from the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington. The modern (pre-1955) shells from the Burke Institute range in beach-front collection date from 1911 to 1931 (Table 1) and include species *Modiolus rectus, Musculus niger, Cardita ventricas, Macoma carlottensis, Mya arenaria,* and *Macoma nasuta*. The radiocarbon ages calculated from these specimens range from 815 ± 15 to 925 ± 20 ^{14}C years. Utilizing the marine reservoir correction curve developed by Calib 8.2, an average marine reservoir correction for this region is 264 ^{14}C years (50 calendar years BP). While there is a narrow range of marine reservoir effects between 211 and 318 ^{14}C years, a species-specific effect was not observed (Table 1).

Table 1. Radiocarbon sample descriptions and data. Gray rows indicate known-age shells dated to develop MRC.

Name	Type	Age ± error (RCY)	MRC	Δ13C	Age ± error (cal year BP)	actual age (cal year BP)	NOSAMS Receipt #	NOSAMS Accession #
WB S1 RCD1 s.h. base U6	Mollusc	1290 ± 20	278 ± 35	-0.84	1494 ± 137	n/a	176236	OS-164669
WB S1 RCD1 s.h. base U6 clam	Mollusc	1210 ± 25	278 ± 35	-1.4	1563 ± 130	n/a	176237	OS-164670
WB S1 U6 RCD2	Mollusc	1450 ± 15	236 30	0.12	1336 ± 112	n/a	176238	OS-164671
PC S3 U3 RCD3	Mollusc	13200 ± 75	278 ± 35	0.44	12646 ± 371	n/a	176239	OS-164691
PC S3 U4 RCD5	Mollusc	13000 ± 75	271 ± 35	-0.31	12305 ± 327	n/a	176240	OS-164692
PC S3 U4 RCD1 a.s.	Mollusc	13250 ± 75	264 ± 36	0.13	12749 ± 366	n/a	176241	OS-164693
PC S4 U6 RCD1	Mollusc	1400 ± 20	264 ± 36		1390 ± 114	n/a	171379	OS-160221
PC S3-4 RCD2	Mollusc	12900 ± 55	264 ± 36		12147 ± 293	n/a	171380	OS-160222
PC S3 RCD4	Mollusc	13200 ± 55	264 ± 36		12674 ± 334	n/a	171381	OS-160223
PC S3 U4 RCD3	Mollusc	13300 ± 75	216 ± 30	0.33	12923 ± 343	n/a	176242	OS-164694
WB S2 U1 RCD1	Plant/Wood	> 48000		-23.48		n/a	176243	OS-164850
PC S4 U6 RCD2	Mollusc	1720 ± 15	236 ± 30	-0.06	1087 ± 145	n/a	176244	OS-164695
DB S3 RCD1 U4	Plant/Wood	> 46700				n/a	171378	OS-160371
DB S5 RCD1 U7	Plant/Wood	> 48000		-28.62		n/a	176245	OS-164851
Mo. r. 6298-1	Mollusc	840 ± 15	236 ± 30	0.15	1872 ± 145	91	176246	OS-164743
Mu. n. 3320-1	Mollusc	860 ± 25	253 ± 51	1.36	1860 ± 148	110	176247	OS-164744
Mu. n. 3320-2	Mollusc	925 ± 20	318 ± 40	1.42	1866 ± 145	110	176248	OS-164745
Ca.v. 13329-1	Mollusc	875 ± 20	270 ± 40	0.49	1867 ± 145	104	176249	OS-164746
Ca. v. 13329-2	Mollusc	890 ± 15	285 ± 30	1.74	1871 ±144	104	176250	OS-164747
Ma. c. 3348-1	Mollusc	895 ± 15	288 ± 30	0.85	1870 ± 143	110	176251	OS-164748
Ma. c. 3348-2	Mollusc	890 ± 20	283 ± 40	0.05	1866 ± 145	110	176252	OS-164749
My. a. 3427-1	Mollusc	905 ± 15	298 ± 30	0.83	1870 ± 143	110	176253	OS-164750
My. a. 3427-2	Mollusc	850 ± 20	243 ±40	0.74	1866 ± 145	110	176254	OS-164751
Ma. n. 3470-1	Mollusc	825 ± 15	221 ± 30	0.99	1872 ± 175	91	176255	OS-164760
Ma. n. 3470-2	Mollusc	815 ± 15	211 ± 30	0.39	1872 ± 175	91	176256	OS-164761

2.3 Optically stimulated luminescence

In depositional environments, minerals are exposed to radiation from in situ uranium (Ur), thorium (Th), and potassium (K) and cosmic rays (Rhodes, 2011; Duller, 2015). Incoming radiation excites electrons which are trapped in structure deformities of quartz and feldspar grains (Rhodes, 2011). When exposed to sunlight, electrons are released from the traps. In returning to their original states, they emit luminescence and the mineral is reset. Upon burial, trapped electrons re-accumulate, and the amount is proportional to the burial time and the radiation exposure, termed “dose”. The rate of irridation, the “dose rate,” can be calculated from the cosmic flux as well as the U, Th, and ^{40}K concentrations of the surrounding materials. The OSL signal is proportional to the dose and can be measured by exposing the mineral to light in a controlled setting. An age since burial can be determined by dividing the dose by the dose rate.

Materials from glacial environments present challenges due to the potential of the OSL signal not being fully reset between transport and deposition (Wallinga and Cunningham, 2015). Additionally, extensive overburden pressure from glacial ice has the potential to partially or completely reset OSL signatures, which could provide large error to the final OSL stage (King et al., 2014). Subglacial environments, especially those under ice streams, have a presence of significant meltwater which can saturate sediment pore space and influence quartz and feldspar exposure to radiation at the time of and for an extended period of time after deposition (Wallinga and Cunningham, 2015; Duller, 2013).

While a detailed description of the OSL procedure can be found in supplement text (Text S2), a summary is provided here. In order to avoid pre-mature bleaching of samples, they were collected before sunrise or after sunset, only exposed to low energy red light, and wrapped in dark black plastic before being transported to East Carolina University (ECU) for preparation and processing. Samples were prepared for OSL analysis under dark-room conditions using standard procedures to extract 63-212 μm quartz. Due to feldspar contamination, a post-IR blue SAR procedure was used to measure the quartz equivalent dose (Murray and Wintle, 2000; Wallinga et al., 2002; Wintle and Murray, 2006).

Bulk sediment was collected from outcrops for high-resolution gamma spectrometry measurements and stored for at least 4 weeks prior to measurement. OSL samples were taken at unit boundaries, while dose rate samples were only taken from the same unit as the OSL samples. Therefore, the gamma dose rates reflect the sample unit only and contain no information about adjacent, underlying, or overlying units. Uranium concentrations determined from ^{234}Th were all significantly higher than concentrations determined from ^{214}Pb and ^{214}Bi. We assumed that ^{234}U was leached out of the sample due to in situ water presence.

The sample ages, calculated in calendar years, were calculated by dividing the dose by the dose-rate (Table S2). For samples with feldspar contamination that showed fading, the ages were corrected as suggested by Auclair et al., (2003). While ^{14}C ages are reported in kilo years ago (kya) calendar year BP (1955), all OSL ages are reported in kya based on the date of collection (2020). OSL ages in kya can be directly compared to kya cal. BP by subtracting 72 years from the OSL age.

Table 2. Dose measurements, dose rate, and OSL age data. Final sample ages are bolded. To directly compare OSL and ^{14}C ages, it would be necessary to subtract 72 years from the OSL ages. This correction is consierdably smaller than the uncertainty of the ages and can therefore be neglected.

Sample	grain sizes measured	Dose (Gy)	Dose err (Gy)	fading rate (g) (%/decade)	g err	Gamma dose rate (Gy/ka)	Gamma dose rate error	Beta dose rate (Gy/ka)	Beta dose rate error (Gy/ka)	Internal Beta dose rate (Gy/ka)	internal Beta dose rate error (Gy/ka)	total dose rate (Gy/ka)	total dose rate error (Gy/ka)	Age unfaded (ka)	err	Age after fading (ka)	err
FCS1-OSL1	90-125	12.13	2.82	7.1	6.1	0.33	0.03	0.61	0.03	0.18	0.07	1.30	0.09	**9.3**	2.3	minimum age	
FCS1-OSL2																	
FCS2-OSL1	63-90	92.96	7.27	3.6	3.8	0.67	0.07	1.27	0.06	0.14	0.06	2.26	0.11	41.2	3.8	**57**	16
FCS2-OSL2	63-90	69.16	4.6	2.7	2.5	0.60	0.06	1.21	0.06	0.14	0.06	2.13	0.10	32.5	2.7	**40.8**	8.2
WBS1-OSL1	150-250	7.5	0.68	2.6	5.5	0.55	0.06	1.10	0.06	0.36	0.21	2.20	0.22	3.40	0.46	**4.1**	1.8
WBS1-OSL2	90-150	11.86	0.68	0		0.56	0.07	1.14	0.06	0.00	0.11	1.90	0.14	**6.24**	0.59		
WBS2-OSL1	90-212	64.58	4.66	3.74	2.5	0.67	0.05	1.39	0.06	0.25	0.23	2.37	0.24	27.2	3.4	**38.1**	9.7
WBS2-OSL2	90-150	70.97	4.1	0		0.67	0.05	1.33	0.07	0.22	0.11	2.27	0.14	**31.3**	2.7		
WBS3-OSL1	150-212	68.43	4.96	0		0.62	0.05	1.20	0.05	0.34	0.04	2.23	0.08	**30.7**	2.5		
WBS3-OSL2	150-212	55.9	4.77	2.99	1.7	0.73	0.06	1.42	0.06	0.25	0.07	2.47	0.11	22.6	2.2	**29.2**	4.6
PCS2-OSL1	125-150	75.47	5.77	4.54	0.28	0.49	0.04	0.97	0.04	0.45	0.07	2.05	0.10	36.8	3.3	**56.6**	4.1
PCS2-OSL2	125-150	93.2	4.11	0		0.50	0.04	1.02	0.05	0.45	0.07	2.10	0.10	**44.4**	2.8		

3 Results

We will be moving through results from the southern-most to the northern-most site. Numerical schemes to describe units at each site are independent and do not correlate between sites. Stratigraphic columns were developed to represent our interpretation of physical data present at several locations across these sites and may not reflect all possible interpretations that have been conducted across Whidbey Island.

3.1 Double Bluff

The stratigraphically lower-most unit visible at Double Bluff, Unit 4, is a visually well-sorted sand with sparse rounded gravel lenses. Unit 4 is normally graded with clasts ranging from granule to pebbles with a consistent horizonal long-axis orientation and occasional silt rip-ups from non-visible underlying units. A gradational boundary leads into the overlying sandy silt and fine clayey silt of Unit 3. This unit contains wavy laminations and woody debris dated to be 46.7+ thousand years (kya) cal. BP (i.e., "radiocarbon dead"; Table 1 NOSAMS Receipt #171378). Unit 3 generally fines upwards but with variable matrix grain size modes from 10-500 μm (Figure 1A). Unit 2 is composed of massive diamicton with a clay and fine-silt matrix, marked by a matrix grain size mode of 8 μm and a mix of angular and rounded granule to cobble-sized clasts without a preferred long-axis orientation. There is a gradational contact between Unit 2 and Unit 1. Unit 1 consists of diamicton with a matrix varying between sandy silt and silty sand with woody debris dated to 48.0+ kya cal. BP in age (i.e., "radiocarbon dead"; Table 1 NOSAMS Receipt #176245) and clasts that are predominantly aligned parallel to bedding and evidence of soft-sediment deformation. This uppermost unit has interbedded silt and clay, as well as marine shells in the upper 50 cm of silt that were inaccessible for sampling. MS values in Unit 3 are distinctly lower than the other units (Figure 1A).

3.2 Fort Casey

The lower-most visible unit, Unit 3, at Fort Casey Site 1 consists of massive diamicton with a fine-silt and clay matrix and randomly oriented pebble to cobble-sized angular and rounded clasts. Interbedded with the massive diamicton are discrete gravel and sand laminations at the base of Unit 3 and silt and clay laminations with rip ups and woody debris toward the top of Unit 3. Unit 2 consists of fine sand to pebble-size clasts in a sandy silt matrix with vertically oriented and reverse-graded angular clasts. Unit 2 has a remarkably consistent matrix grain size throughout the unit and a minimum OSL age of 9.33 ± 2.3 kya (Table 2 Sample #1) from the upper unit boundary (Figure 1A). This unit also contains sand and silt lenses with mud and plant rip ups (Figure 1A). A gradational boundary leads to Unit 1, which is massive diamicton similar to Unit 3 but with a matrix distinctly lighter in color.

At Fort Casey Site 2, the lower visible unit, Unit 5, contains interbedded clay and sand with reverse grading (Figure 1A). Unit 4, in which no samples were collected, consists of diamicton with concentrated granule to pebble lenses and clay and silt lenses, as well as evidence of soft-sediment deformation. Unit 3 is a massive clay, followed by the Unit 2 layer of silt about 20 cm thick, continuous across an irregular, undulating, and most likely erosional contact. OSL dates at the top of Unit 2 and base of Unit 1 were found to be 40.8 ± 8.2 and 56.6 ± 15.5 kya (Table 2 Samples #3, 2). The overlying Unit 1 is a diamicton with very fine sand to cobble sized angular and rounded clasts. Normal grading is present in the matrix of Unit 1 with fractured (i.e., seemingly crushed) granite clasts.

3.3 Penn Cove

The lowest visible unit at this site, Unit 5, comprises a reverse-graded diamicton with a coarsening upward sand matrix and rounded granules and pebbles (Figure 1A). Following a sharp boundary with Unit 5, Unit 4 consists of silt and sand laminations with cross-bedded sands near the top. Unit 4 deposits were OSL dated to ages 56.6 ± 4.1 and 44.4 ± 2.8 kya (Table 2 Samples #10, 11). The grain size modes for Unit 4 matrix are predominantly between 500-700 μm (Figure 1A). An erosional boundary at the top of Unit 4 leads to the massive clayey silt diamicton of Unit 3 with rounded fine- to cobble-size clasts and occasional sandy silt and silt lenses. A gradational boundary separates Units 3 and 2, which is a massive clay diamicton with rounded fine sand to cobble grains and articulated shells. Six shells from Unit 2 were radiocarbon dated with ages spanning 12.9 ± 0.3 to 12.1 ± 0.3 kya cal. BP (Table 1 NOSAMS Receipt #176239-176242, 171380, 171381). Unit 2 also contains sand lenses and wood fragments. Unit 2 has a sharp contact with Unit 1, which consists of normally graded gravel with rounded and angular small to large pebbles with no predominant long-axis orientation. A mode of clay-sized grains is visible in Units 2 and 3 but is not visible in Unit 1 (Figure 1A).

3.4 West Beach

At West Beach Site 1, the lowest unit, Unit 5, consists of matrix-supported diamicton with randomly orientated clasts and two matrix grain size modes at 8 and 20 μm (Figure 1A). This unit has a sandy-silt lamination that interrupts the diamicton. The diamicton above the silty-sand lamination, however, contains highly irregular dips and soft-sediment deformation. Unit 5 has a gradational boundary with Unit 4 – a light clay layer deposited on a laterally irregular surface, marked by normal-grading, or fining upward (Figure 1A). Unit 3 consists of a thick, 0.25-m clast-supported gravel layer with poorly sorted fine sand to cobble size clasts. A sharp, horizontally regular contact occurs between Unit 3 to the 0.75 m-thick, well-sorted sand of Unit 2 with OSL ages of 6.2 ± 0.6 and 4.1 ± 1.8 kya (Table 2 Samples #5, 4). Unit 2 has a gradational contact with Unit 1, which is a modern soil on top of a basal shell hash dating between 1.56 ± 0.1 and 1.34 ± 0.1 kya cal. BP (Table 1 NOSAMS Receipt #173237, 176236). MS values are similar throughout Units 5, 4, 2, and 1, but decrease in Unit 3 (Figure 1A).

At the base of West Beach Site 2 are cross-bedded and coarse sand laminations. OSL dates from the lowermost sand in Unit 8 are dated to 31.3 ± 2.7 and 38.1 ± 9.7 kya (Table 2 Sample #7, 6). A gradational contact leads into Unit 7, consisting of silt and clay with radiocarbon-dead woody debris. Unit 6 consists of sand with wavy bedding and silt laminations. No samples were collected from Units 5 and 4, consisting of a peat layer and a unit of sand and silt laminations, respectively. The Unit 3 diamicton matrix coarsens upwards and this unit has many grain size modes between 5 and 70 μm (Figure 1A). Unit 2 consists of diamicton with a fine sand matrix and clasts as large as pebbles and is not spatially continuous throughout the site. A gradational boundary leads into the 0.5 m-thick layer of Unit 1, consisting of predominantly of silt.

3.5 Rocky Point, Cliffside

The lowest visible unit at Cliffside, Unit 6, consists of fine sand to cobble-sized rounded clasts. This massive diamicton has no preferential orientation for clast long axes. The matrix changes from clay to sand and includes sediment deformation beneath clasts (Figure 1A). Unit 6 gradationally transitions to Unit 5, which is a normally graded, fine sand to cobble-size clast diamicton. Unit 5 is normally graded gravel lenses containing clasts with consistent horizontal long-axis orientation. Unit 5 gradually transitions into the granule and sand layer of Unit 4, which includes sand and silt lenses within gravel-rich and wavy laminations. Unit 3 intrudes into Unit 4 and consists of a massive diamicton with rounded, cobble-sized clasts. The matrix of Unit 3 has two grain size modes at 5 and 20 μm (Figure 1A). Two of the lower-unit samples for Cliffside Unit 3 were taken from the more southern Rocky Point site as the identified Unit 3 is continuous throughout both sites. Unit 3 gradually transitions into Unit 2, which is a laterally discontinuous light clay unit with silt layers. Unit 1 is comprised of mostly rounded, normally graded crushed material with fine to large cobble size clasts.

4 Discussion and Interpretation

We use the sedimentological units described in Section 3 to establish a facies model that encompasses glaciomarine and coastal sedimentary processes and depositional environments (i.e., emergent or submergent landscape). Aided by geochronological constraints, this facies model is applied to the stratigraphic sequences observed at each site to construct a regional history of ice behavior and landscape evolution before, during, and following the LGM (Figure 2).

4.1 Facies interpretation

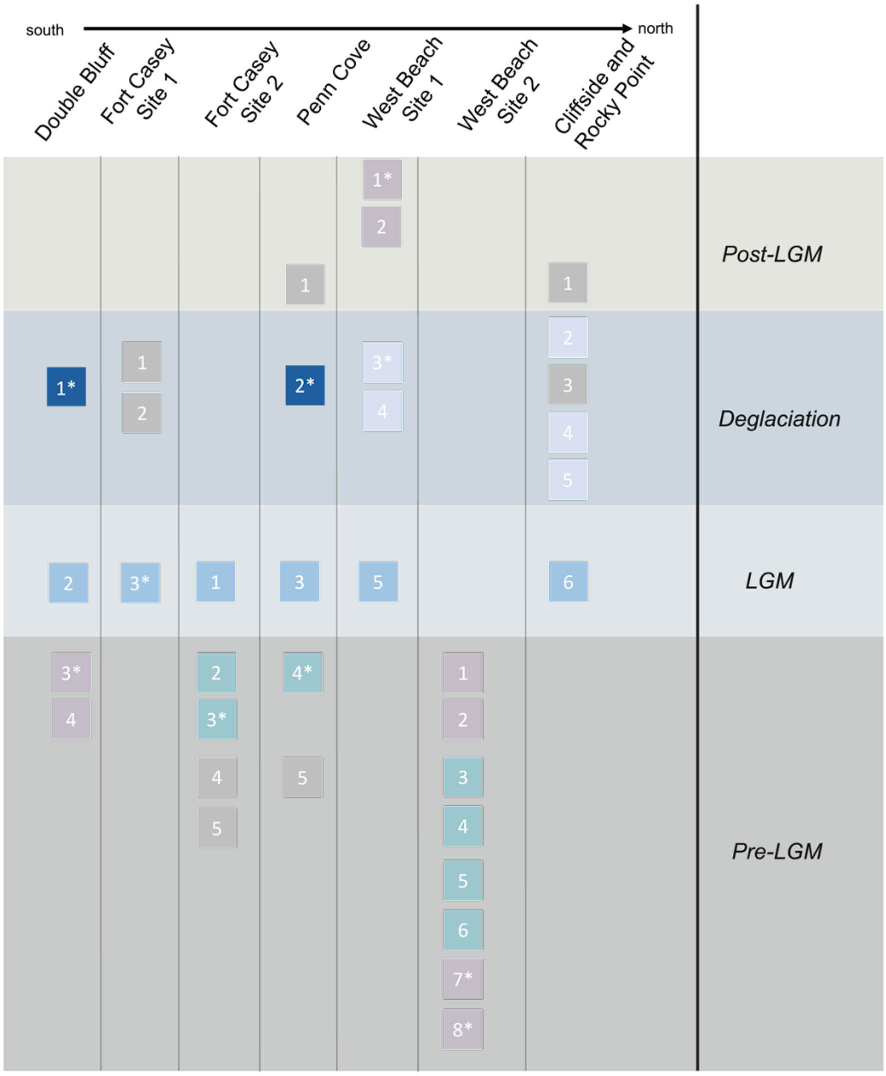
Structureless diamicton with randomly oriented clasts of variable size, roundness, lithology, and a range in matrix size are classified as **glacial till,** or sediments deposited directly by glaciers in the subglacial environment (Boulton and Deynoux, 1981; Sengupta, 2017). Some biological material may be incorporated into glacial till in the form of broken shells or woody fragments. This reworked biogenic material may be incorporated into the ice as it moves across the landscape, therefore radiocarbon ages of biogenic material will be older than glacial occupation. These characteristics are consistent with glaciomarine tills described offshore of West Antarctica (e.g., Kirschner et al., 2012; Prothro et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2019) and western Greenland (Sheldon et al., 2016; O'Regan et al., 2021), as well as glacial tills deposited by the relict British-Irish Ice Sheet (Evans and Thompson, 2010). Lower boundaries of glacial till units are often characterized by erosional contacts, reflecting glacial advance and erosion of pre-existing substrate, and may contain rip-up clasts from underlying units. Due to similarities in structure to formerly identified glacial tills, units classified as (local) LGM glacial till (i.e., Vashon Till) in the Puget Lowland include Unit 2 from Double Bluff, Unit 3 at Fort Casey Site 1, Unit 1 from Fort Casey Site 2, Unit 3 from Penn Cove, Unit 5 from West Beach Site 1, and Unit 6 from Cliffside (Figures 1, 2). Little post-depositional erosion or reworking of this glacial material is consistent with previous work identifying glacial tills in the region (Booth & Hallet, 1993; Kovanen & Slaymaker, 2004; Eyles et al., 2018; Demet et al., 2019).

Glacial outwash is characterized as diamicton with a range of well-rounded and some angular clasts with parallel-to-bedding clast orientation that suggests sediment transport via proglacial meltwater from an upstream source of glacial ice (Boulton and Deynoux, 1981). This facies may indicate deposition in a subaerial or subaqueous environment, but importantly, clast orientation distinguishes proglacial outwash from subglacial till (Boulton and Deynoux, 1981). The deposits may also exhibit normal grading and/or sedimentary structures indicative of soft-sediment deformation (e.g., loading structures, flame structures, sediment deformation beneath clasts; Boulton and Deynoux, 1981). Glacial outwash recorded in British Columbia (Clague, 1975) and the forefield of Mýrdalsjökull ice cap in Iceland (Kjær et al., 2004) feature similar structures seen in several units among our Puget Lowland outcrop sites. Using the defined classification of glacial outwash, Units 1 and 2 from Fort Casey Site 1, Units 4 and 5 from Fort Casey Site 2, Units 1 and 5 from Penn Cove, and Units 1 and 3 from Cliffside are interpreted as glacial outwash deposits (Figures 1, 2).

A third diamicton, structurally similar to those interpreted as glacial till yet containing articulated and/or broken marine shells, occasional winnowing of fine-matrix material, and sedimentary structures such as wavy laminations, is interpreted as **glacimarine deposits,** composed of both glacial and pelagic sediments that accumulate on the ocean floor seward of the ice margin. Such pelagic sediments have been samples from a geographically-diverse population of sediment cores from deglaciated continental margins (e.g., Anderson et al., 1980; Prothro et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2019), although preservation of shells and other carbonate-based materials are less common in Antarctic glaciomarine sediments. Glacimarine deposits are also identified in coastal outcrop deposits of northern Svalbard with similar characteristics (Alexanderson et al., 2018). Both Unit 1 from Double Bluff and Unit 2 from Penn Cove are consistent with these classifications and closely resemble the structure and composition of the glacimarine deposits identified on deglaciated continental margins (Figures 1, 2; Anderson et al., 1980; Prothro et al., 2018). At sites Double Bluff and Penn Cove, this facies (a.k.a. Everson Glaciomarine Drift) overlays glacial till, indicating ice marginal retreat into a marine setting with sand-rich deposits recording removal of fines by bottom currents. Conversely, glacial till that stratigraphically transitions upsection into cross-bedded sands with parallel-to-bed oriented clasts and wavy laminations that are barren of marine shells indicate retreat into a subaerial environment, as is observed proximal to the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap in Iceland (Kjær et al., 2004). Unit 3 from West Beach Site 1 and Unit 5 from Cliffside record such evidence of **subaerial glacial retreat** both meet these classifications (Figures 1, 2).

Facies transitions where grain sizes coarsen-upward (a.k.a. reverse grading) and changes in MS values can be associated with **landscape emergence** and differentiation of source material, respectively (Komar, 1977; McCabe, 1986; Sengupta, 2017). Regardless of the process(es) explaining the observed grain coarsening, which may include relative sea level fall outpacing eustatic sea-level rise, tectonic activity, glacial isostatic response, or a combination of these factors, we would expect such processes to be marked by facies transitions along the coast. In the Puget Lowland, emergence above sea level has been recorded in the stratigraphy by thin subaerial deposits (e.g., fluvial sediments and soil) overlying the glacial and glaciomarine deposits (Domack, 1984; Demet et al., 2019). The preservation of the glacial till organization and sedimentary structures including cross-bedding features in the Puget Lowland indicate coarsening-upward seen in the sedimentary record is not a result of tectonic activity. Coarsening-upward grain sizes seen in the transition from finer marine sediments to coastal deposits have been identified in coastal outcrops in northern Svalbard and are interpreted to indicate relative sea level fall (McCabe, 1986; Alexanderson et al., 2018). While glacial isostatic rebound is not responsible for the shallowing-upward of Svalbard facies (Alexanderson et al., 2018), the facies and coarsening material identified between Units 3 and 2 at Fort Casey Site 2, transition from Unit 5 laminated silt to Unit 4 cross-bedded sand at Penn Cove, and coarsening of grain size with peaks and MS across Units 7 and 6 at West Beach Site 2 could be connected to land emergence events (Figures 1, 2).

Facies transitions where grain-sizes fine upward, correspond with increases or decreases in MS, and are accompanied by the appearance of marine shells are associated with **landscape submergence** (Sengupta, 2017; Komar, 1977). Similarly classified facies that mark the transition from a subaerial to a submarine environment have been seen in seismic profiles and regional stratigraphic data in the southwestern Pacific in South Island, New Zealand (Carter et al., 1986). Therefore, the fining of material between Unit 4 sand deposits to Unit 3 silts at Double Bluff, introduction of shells to the fining material between Units 2 and 1 at West Beach Site 1, and fining of grain size across the Unit 2 and 1 boundary at West Beach Site 2 are all interpreted as a transition to a submarine setting (Figures 1, 2).



Site	Unit	Type	Date (kya)
Double Bluff	1,3		48.0+ cal. BP
Fort Casey Site 1	3		9.33 ± 2.3
Fort Casey Site 2	3		56.6 ± 15.5 ; 40.8 ± 8.2
Penn Cove	2		12.9 ± 0.3 cal. BP; 12.1 ± 0.3 cal. BP
	4		56.6 ± 4.1 ; 44.4 ± 2.8
West Beach Site 1	1		1.56 ± 0.1 cal. BP
	3		6.2 ± 0.6 ; 4.1 ± 1.8
West Beach Site 2	7		30.7 ± 2.5 ; 29.2 ± 4.6
	8		38.1 ± 9.7 ; 31.3 ± 2.65

Figure 2. Grouping of facies based on depositional time periods across Whidbey Island. Units with asterisks have radiocarbon or OSL dates included in the table on the lower left.

4.2 Pre-LGM landscape evolution

Prior to glacial advance of the Puget Lobe across Whidbey Island during the LGM, several submergence and emergence facies transitions record dynamic landscape changes. Landscape emergence above sea level prior to LGM glaciation is recorded by outcrops exposed at Penn Cove and Fort Casey Site 2. Penn Cove OSL ages identify this landscape emergence to occur between 56.6 ± 4.1 and 44.4 ± 2.8 kya. Similar Fort Casey Site 2 OSL ages constrain this transition to having occurred from 56.6 ± 15.5 to 40.8 ± 8.2 kya, placing the emergence within the MIS 4 glacial and MIS 3 interglacial stages, which may be connected to a lack of ice coverage and reduced CIS loading of the solid Earth at these times.

A sequence of submergent and emergent facies are observed in the pre-LGM deposits at West Beach Site 2. OSL dates places a submergence event between 38.1 ± 9.7 and 31.3 ± 2.65 kya while OSL dates from overlying facies places subsequent emergence between 30.7 ± 2.5 and 29.2 ± 4.6 kya. Both of these events occurred within the MIS 3 interglacial. This rapid transition between landscape submergence and emergence not only identifies high sedimentation rates at this site during MIS 3, but also suggests that the Puget Lowland experienced rapid landscape changes during MIS 3. Clay and sand deposits included as part of the emergence and submergence interpretation may have previously been identified and referred to as the Lawton Clay (Mullineaux et al., 1965) and Esperance Sands, respectively. Prior to LGM ice advance into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Puget Lowland was cut-off and developed into a proglacial lake basin, responsible for the deposition of the Lawton Clay (Mullineaux et al., 1965). Southward migrating proglacial channels deposited the Esperance Sands and developed into a large outwash plain across the Puget Lowland, radiocarbon dated to 18,000-20,000 years ago (Mullineaux et al., 1965; Crandell et al., 1966; Easterbrook, 1969; Clague, 1976; Booth, 1994). While the uncertainties in our OSL-dates contribute to discrepancy with previously collected radiocarbon dates of the Esperance Sands (Text S2; Easterbrook, 1969), the OSL ages relative to each other are useful in considering rates of sediment deposition and landscape evolution.

4.3 LGM glacial advance

Erosional contacts between glacial till (Vashon Till) and underlying facies mark LGM advance of the Puget Lobe into the region at multiple sites across Whidbey Island including Double Bluff, Fort Casey Site 2, and Penn Cove (Figure S2A). OSL ages from below the erosional contact of LGM tills places maximum age of ice extent at 56.6 ± 4.1 and 44.4 ± 2.8 kya, within the timeframe of MIS 5. However, previously radiocarbon dated-wood material more precisely dates final LGM advance into the region after 17,500 cal. yr. BP (Mullineaux et al., 1965; Porter & Swanson, 1998; Table 2). This major difference in ages suggests a great deal of glacial erosion at the ice-bed boundary of the Puget Lobe during ice advance.

4.4 Deglaciation

Glacimarine sediments (Everson Glaciomarine Drift) in the uppermost 50 cm of Double Bluff Unit 1 record retreat of the Puget Lobe within a marine environment (Figure S2B; Thorson, 1980; Dethier et al., 1995; Demet et al., 2019). At Penn Cove, the presence of articulated shells and winnowing of smaller grain sizes from glacial tills suggests ice retreat in a marine environment. Five articulated shells found at Penn Cove were radiocarbon dated to a range of dates between 12.9 ± 0.3 and 12.1 ± 0.3 kya cal. yr. BP (Table 1), placing glacial ice in this region for ~3,000 years longer than previously thought (e.g., Easterbrook, 1992; Dethier et al., 1995; Swanson & Caffee, 2001). Based on the range in shell radiocarbon dates, glacial ice also appears to have been stable at Penn Cove for at least 1,000 years (Figure 1A) with high sedimentation rates, accumulating 2.5 m during glaciation. Improved constraints on timing of Puget Lobe retreat has important implications for eustatic sea-level rise during the late Pleistocene and suggests Puget Lobe contributions to Meltwater Pulse 1A (Peltier, 2005; Gomez et al., 2015; Gorbarenko et al., 2019; Yokoyama & Purcell, 2021).

Deglacial facies seen at the more northern West Beach Site 1 and Cliffside indicate ice retreat within a subaerial environment (Figure S2A). The change in ice retreat style seen from the more southern Double Bluff and Penn Cove sites to the northern West Beach and Cliffside sites may be due to the substantial, 1,000-year stand-still of ice at Penn Cove. The duration of ice stability at this location is an indication that ice retreat was step-wise, rather than catastrophic (c.f., Easterbrook, 1992). Step-wise retreat of the ice margin is also supported by the presence of grounding-zone wedges (GZWs); the development of these ice-marginal landforms were likely supported by the identified high rates of sedimentation in the region (~2.5 mm/year; Simkins et al., 2017; Simkins et al., 2018; Demet et al., 2019). Additionally, the Rocky Point site features a bedrock high (i.e., a potential pinning point of ice; Hogan et al., 2020) and mapped GZWs, suggesting this site could have periodically stabilized ice during land rebound before final deglaciation of the region (Simkins et al., 2018; Demet et al., 2019).

4.5 Post-LGM landscape evolution

Following deglaciation of Whidbey Island, the Penn Cove and Cliffside sites record outwash deposits from proglacial fluvial sources. An OSL age within the submergence facies of Unit 2 at West Beach Site 1 marks the transition from a post-glacial fluvial environment to a submarine environment between 6.2 ± 0.6 and 4.1 ± 1.8 kya. Radiocarbon-dated shell hash sampled from the uppermost unit at this same West Beach Site 1 suggests a highly energetic aquatic marine or coastal environment was present in this location as early as 1.56 ± 0.1 kya cal. BP, at least 5,000 years following ice loss in the Puget Lowland. After initial lithospheric rebound from ice-loading and the possibility of a local tectonic event, it is feasible vertical land movement slowed enough to allow local sea level to resubmerge the region around 1,000 years ago (Figure 1A, 2). Overall, findings from this work support better understanding of the extinct CIS while also elucidating the role GIA and subglacial topography may play in determining ice-margin retreat styles for systems with similar subglacial topography and rheologic settings such as margins of Greenland and the Antarctic Peninsula (Eyles et al., 2018; Whitehouse et al., 2019; Nield et al., 2014).

5 Conclusions

This decimeter-scale physical sedimentological assessment, paired with geochronological assessment of seven sites across the deglaciated Puget Lowland, provides spatiotemporal information on landscape emergence and submergence as well as final ice advance and retreat of the southernmost CIS. Rates of vertical landscape changes constrained through OSL dating indicates the Puget Lowland was a highly dynamic region where a sequence of landscape emergence and submergence occurred within ~1,000 years during MIS 3 despite the concurrent period of rapid and substantial global mean sea level rise (Yokoyama & Purcell, 2021). Additionally, these findings place glacial ice in the Puget Lowland for 3,000 years longer during the LGM than previously thought, with final retreat occurring across the middle of Whidbey Island at approximately 12.1 ± 0.3 kya cal. BP, which may have implications for contributions to Meltwater Pulse 1A. Radiocarbon dates are used to show ice marginal stand-still and substantial grounding zone sedimentation during final retreat. While more southern sites (e.g., Double Bluff and Penn Cove) record ice retreat within submarine environments, the northernmost sites (e.g., Cliffside and Rocky Point), which feature a topographic high and previously mapped grounding-zone wedges (Demet et al., 2019), appear to record ice retreat into a subaerial environment. This data records empirical evidence of rapid vertical landscape evolution and paired marine-terminating ice stability for at least a millennium. The similarities between the rheology in this location and the rheology of the Antarctic Peninsula, as well as the topographic similarities between the Puget Lowland and modern margins of the Greenland Ice Sheet make these findings highly relevant to increasing process-based understanding of solid Earth influence on ice dynamics in contemporary marine-terminating glacial systems.

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Digital data including site coordinates and sample grain size, trace element (not included in analysis), moisture content, and magnetic susceptibility data and all 236 physical samples are housed in the PANGAEA database (McKenzie et al., *submitted*) and at the Washington Department of Natural Resources at the Washington Geological Survey. Physical samples are in WhirlPak bags, labelled by site name, number, and sampling interval in centimeters. When collected in the field, unit names were given from down-to-up outcrop. For the purpose of simplicity, the unit names were flipped for manuscript analyses to be listed as smallest to highest up-to-down outcrop. To request physical data, please contact Jessica Czajkowski (Jessica.Czajkowski@dnr.wa.gov) and/or Ashley Cabibbo (Ashley.Cabibbo@dnr.wa.gov) at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

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