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1 **Flow patterns around two neighboring patches of emergent vegetation**
2 **and possible implications for deposition and vegetation growth.**

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16
17 **Abstract**

18 The flow around two neighboring, circular, vegetation patches of equal diameter (D) was
19 investigated using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD). Depending on the patches' transverse
20 and longitudinal center-to-center spacing (T and L , respectively), several distinct flow patterns
21 were observed. The patterns are compared to flow near an isolated patch. The key flow patterns
22 were interpreted in terms of implications for deposition. Deposition maps were calculated for
23 two different threshold velocities: $0.5U_0$ and $0.7U_0$, where U_0 is the free stream velocity. When
24 the two patches were far away from each other, the interaction of their wakes was weak, and the
25 flow and deposition pattern around each patch resembled that of a single, isolated patch. When
26 the patches were very close, wake interaction took place, resulting in additional deposition
27 along the centerline between the two patches, but further downstream than the deposition in line
28 with each patch. For some intermediate patch spacings, the wake of the upstream patch was
29 dramatically shortened, relative to an isolated patch, and the wake of the downstream patch was
30 lengthened. The results show that flow distribution is influenced by interaction between
31 neighboring vegetation patches and suggest that this may create feedbacks that influence the
32 evolution of vegetated landscapes.

33 **Keywords:** Sediment deposition, Landscape evolution, Patches of vegetation, Computational
34 Fluid Dynamics.

35 **1. Introduction**

36 Vegetated landscapes provide a variety of ecosystem services, including providing
37 habitat [1], producing oxygen [2], reducing turbidity [3], and decreasing bank erosion [4]. These
38 landscapes develop over time scales of decades to millennia through the action of vegetation-
39 flow-sediment feedbacks: the presence of vegetation modifies the spatial distribution of water
40 flow, and thus sedimentation and erosion. Subsequently, changes to water flow, sedimentation,
41 and erosion patterns affect the spatial pattern of vegetation establishment [5-7]. Understanding
42 these vegetation-flow-sediment feedbacks is important to predict the outcomes of river
43 management actions [8-10].

44 Recent research has improved the understanding of vegetation-flow-sediment feedbacks
45 created by isolated, finite vegetation patches. Velocity declines 1 to 2 patch diameters (D)
46 upstream of the patch, as flow is diverted around the region of high drag caused by the presence
47 of the vegetation [7, 11, 12]. The diversion of flow around the patch produces locally enhanced
48 flow along the vegetation edge, which promotes erosion and may inhibit the lateral expansion of
49 the patch, a negative feedback [8, 9, 13, 14]. Because the patches are porous, some flow
50 penetrates through the patches into the wake, sometimes referred to as bleed flow. The bleed
51 flow entering the wake delays the onset of the von Kármán vortex street until a distance L_1
52 behind the patch. Over the distance L_1 behind the patch, which we call the near wake region, the
53 mean and turbulent velocity are depressed, relative to the free stream, and this encourages the
54 deposition of fine sediment, creating conditions that favor new vegetation growth and thus patch
55 expansion in the streamwise direction, a positive feedback [15,16]. The formation of the von
56 Kármán vortex street at the end of the L_1 wake region significantly elevates the turbulence level,
57 which may inhibit deposition. Beyond this point the velocity begins to recover back to the free
58 stream value U_0 .

59 Although several studies have contributed to the description of flow and deposition near
60 an individual patch of vegetation, relatively few studies have investigated the interaction
61 between two patches placed in close proximity to one another. The interaction between two
62 developing wakes makes the flow field behind a pair of patches significantly more complex
63 than that near a single patch. In the relatively simple case of two side-by-side circular patches
64 separated by a gap, the flow is accelerated next to and in between the patches for all gap widths
65 [7, 17]. This flow acceleration would tend to promote erosion and thereby inhibit the lateral
66 growth of the patches. The wake in line with and immediately downstream of each individual
67 patch is similar to that observed behind a single isolated patch, creating conditions that favor the
68 deposition of fine material and, consequently, patch expansion in the streamwise direction in
69 line with the individual patches [17]. Further downstream, the two wakes merge, producing a
70 velocity minimum that promotes deposition on the centerline between the patches, but at some
71 distance removed from the patches. Meire et al. [17] argue that this secondary deposition region
72 may promote the growth of vegetation on the centerline between the patches, which in turn
73 could diminish the flow between the patches, ultimately producing conditions favorable for the
74 two patches to merge.

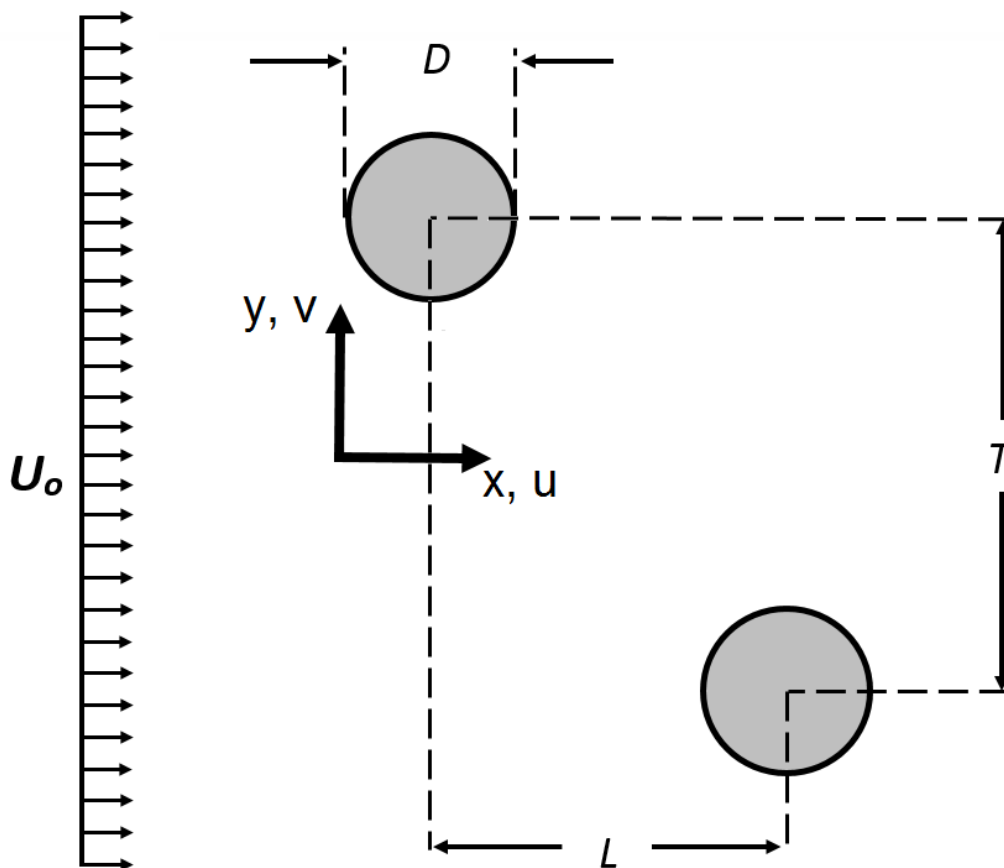
75 In this paper we build on the work of Meire et al. [17] by considering a wider range of
76 two-patch configurations. In particular, the patch spacing was varied in both the transverse and
77 longitudinal direction, denoted by T and L , respectively, as in Fig. 1. This is an important
78 refinement, because in very few cases will the oncoming flow be perfectly aligned with the
79 patches, i.e. $L = 0$, as assumed by Meire et al. [17]. A numerical model was used to explore how
80 the patch spacing impacts the shape of the wake behind each patch, and the modeled velocity

81 field was used to infer possible deposition and growth patterns. Using the results for pairs of
82 patches, we infer how initial patch spacing might influence landscape development.

83

84 2. Modeling Approach

85 This study considered emergent vegetation, for which flow diversion occurs
86 predominantly in the horizontal plane. In particular, previous experimental studies using similar
87 flow and patch configurations showed that three-dimensional effects associated with the bottom
88 boundary-layer were of second order with regard to wake structure [18]. Subsequently, we have
89 chosen a two-dimensional model, representing the streamwise and transverse coordinates,
90 respectively (Fig. 1). In this study the x -axis pointed in the direction of flow with $x = 0$ at the
91 upstream edge of the patches, and the y -axis was in the transverse direction, with $y = 0$ at the
92 center of the transverse gap between the patches. The longitudinal (L) and transverse (T)
93 spacing between the patches was measured between the patch centers. The velocity (u, v)
94 corresponded to (x, y) , respectively. The individual stems within a patch were represented by
95 solid cylinders of diameter d , placed with stem density n [cylinders/cm²]. This produced a
96 frontal area per volume of $a = nd$, and a solid volume fraction $\phi = (\pi/4) ad$.



97

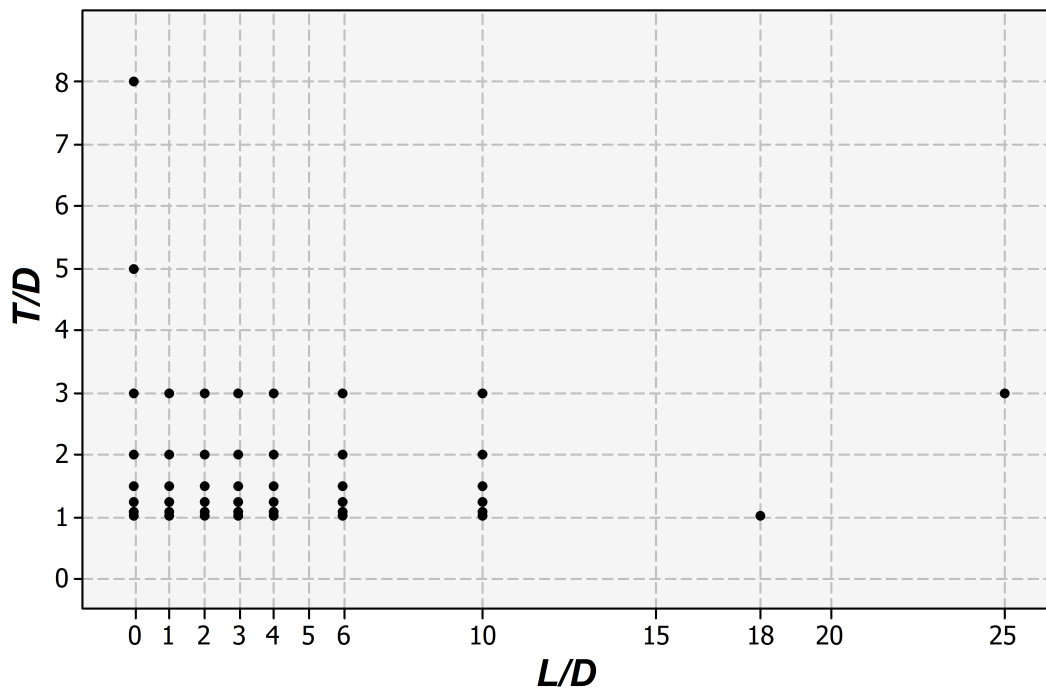
98 **Fig. 1** Definition sketch for two circular patches (grey circles) of equal diameter, D . L is the longitudinal spacing and
99 T is the transverse spacing, both measured between the centers of each patch. U_0 is the uniform inlet velocity set to
100 9.5 cm s^{-1} for these experiments.

101

102 Numerical experiments were carried out for 46 patch arrangements defined by eight different values of T/D between 1 and 8, and nine different values of L/D between 0 and 25. The

103 specific combinations of T/D and L/D are shown in Figure 2. Each patch had a diameter $D = 22$
 104 cm, and was composed of 45 rigid cylinders of diameter $d = 1.2$ cm in a staggered arrangement,
 105 producing a solid volume fraction of $\phi \approx 10\%$ and a frontal area per volume $a = 0.13 \text{ cm}^{-1}$. The
 106 numerical experiments were conducted with $U_0 = 9.5 \text{ cm/s}$. To reduce the influence of the inlet,
 107 the upstream patch was placed $3 \text{ m} (\approx 14D)$ downstream from the channel inlet. The
 108 computational flow domain chosen spans $45D$ (to $60D$) in the streamwise direction and $20D$ in
 109 the spanwise direction. The blockage ratio, B , i.e., the ratio of the total obstructed width ($2D$) to
 110 the channel width ($W = 25D$) was 0.08 . Since $B \ll 1$, the impact of the channel walls was low:
 111 preliminary simulations showed that, for channel widths of $15D$ and $20D$, the difference in the
 112 velocity for any point was less than 5% (tested specifically for $L/D = 0$ and $T/D = 1.5$).

113 In order to provide a baseline for comparison, six simulations with a single patch were
 114 also performed. In these runs the center of the single patch was placed at the same position as
 115 the upstream patch within the pair. Specifically, single patch controls were run for $x = 0.5D$ and
 116 $y = 0.5D, 0.545D, 0.625D, 0.75D, 1D$, and $1.5D$, corresponding to the two-patch cases $T/D = 1,$
 117 $1.09, 1.25, 1.5, 2$, and 3 .



118 **Fig. 2** The 46 two-patch arrangements consider in this study. The center-to-center longitudinal spacing (L) and
 119 transverse (T) spacing were both varied.
 120

121 Simulations were carried out using the commercial CFD (Computational Fluid
 122 Dynamics) code FLUENT[®]. This code uses the finite volume method for the spatial
 123 discretization of the domain. The governing equations are integrated over each control volume,
 124 such that mass and momentum are conserved, in a discrete sense, for each control volume. The
 125 simulations in this study were performed using the two-dimensional steady-state RANS
 126 (Reynolds Averaged Navier Stokes) equations with a $k-\epsilon$ model.

127 Considering a steady flow of an incompressible and homogeneous fluid, the Reynolds-
 128 averaged equations for conservation of mass and momentum are given by:

$$\frac{\partial u_i}{\partial x_i} = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial u_j u_i}{\partial x_j} = -\frac{1}{\rho} \frac{\partial p}{\partial x_i} + \nu \frac{\partial^2 u_i}{\partial x_j \partial x_j} - \frac{\partial \overline{u'_i u'_j}}{\partial x_j}$$

129 where i or $j = 1$ or 2 ; x_1 and x_2 denote the streamwise (x) and cross-stream (y) directions
 130 respectively; u_1 and u_2 are the corresponding mean velocity components (i.e., $u_1 = u$ and $u_2 = v$).
 131 $\overline{u'_i u'_j}$ is the Reynolds stress component, where u' denotes the fluctuating part of the velocity; p is
 132 the pressure; and ρ is the fluid density. For the calculation of the Reynolds stresses, the
 133 assumption of Boussinesq's approximation is used

$$\overline{u'_i u'_j} = \frac{\mu_t}{\rho} \left(\frac{\partial u_i}{\partial x_j} + \frac{\partial u_j}{\partial x_i} \right) - \frac{2}{3} k \delta_{ij}$$

134 where μ_t is the turbulent viscosity, δ_{ij} the Kronecker delta and k is the turbulent kinetic energy
 135 per unit mass, given by

$$k = \frac{1}{2} (\overline{u_1^2} + \overline{u_2^2})$$

136 Along with the Boussinesq approximation, the following definition of the eddy viscosity is used

$$\mu_t = \rho c_\mu \frac{k^2}{\varepsilon}$$

137 where c_μ is an empirical constant and ε is the energy dissipation rate given by the following
 138 equation

$$\varepsilon = \frac{k^{\frac{3}{2}}}{S}$$

139 where S is the length scale involved. The distributions of k and ε are calculated from the
 140 following transport equations

$$\frac{\partial \rho u_j k}{\partial x_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j} \left(\frac{\mu_t}{\sigma_k} \frac{\partial k}{\partial x_j} \right) + G - \rho \varepsilon$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho u_j \varepsilon}{\partial x_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j} \left(\frac{\mu_t}{\sigma_\varepsilon} \frac{\partial \varepsilon}{\partial x_j} \right) + c_1 \frac{\varepsilon}{k} G - \rho c_2 \frac{\varepsilon^2}{k}$$

141 where G represents the generation of turbulence kinetic energy due to the mean velocity
 142 gradients

$$G = \mu_t \left(\frac{\partial u_i}{\partial x_j} + \frac{\partial u_j}{\partial x_i} \right) \frac{\partial u_i}{\partial x_j}$$

143 The standard values of the constants $c_\mu = 0.09$, $c_1 = 1.44$, $c_2 = 1.92$, $\sigma_k = 1.0$ and $\sigma_\varepsilon = 1.3$ are
 144 used in the present computations.

145 As already mentioned, two-dimensional simulations were used in this study as they are
146 able to capture the flow features that are important for the present goal. Fluent, CFD numerical
147 code used in this study, use the finite control-volume method for the spatial discretization of the
148 domain. Hence, in the two-dimensional simulations the volume is the computational domain in
149 the xy plane multiplied by a unit depth (in the z direction). Pressure-velocity coupling was
150 achieved in some simulations using the SIMPLE (Semi-Implicit Method for Pressure-Linked
151 Equations) and in other simulations a combination of the SIMPLE and coupled pressure-based
152 algorithms. In most of the cases, the simulations converged only using the SIMPLE method. In
153 a few cases we changed from SIMPLE to coupled algorithm to reach the convergence of the
154 solution. A second order upwind scheme was used for spatial discretization of the flow
155 equations. Details of the governing equations, turbulence model, and algorithms can be found in
156 the FLUENT[®] user's guide [19].

157 The full domain and zoomed-in views of the numerical grid for $L/D = 1$ and $T/D = 2$ are
158 shown in Figure 3. The grid had a finer spacing in regions of larger gradients (near the wall, the
159 patch, and the wake) and coarser spacing in the regions of low velocity gradients. In addition,
160 the grid was a block-structured grid composed of Cartesian H-grid blocks, which were uniform
161 in the horizontal plane, and O-grid blocks, which were stretched towards the cylinders. The
162 present meshing method has been previously applied with success for flows around cylinders
163 (see, for example, Stoesser et al. [20]). A grid independency test was performed to ensure the
164 quality of our CFD simulations. Three progressively finer grids were employed: a coarser grid,
165 with 799600 elements; a medium grid, with 1131000 elements; and a fine grid, with 1605000
166 elements.

167 The cylinders into the patch were arranged in a square array. The array was drawn
168 inside a circle with diameter of 22cm that represents the boundary of the patch. The array have a
169 square form divided in 49 (7x7) smaller squares with 3cmx3cm. The small squares in the array
170 were filled with the stems. The stems and small squares are all concentric. Finally the 45 stems
171 were disposed symmetrically into the array and for this reason there are no stems at the array
172 corners (See Fig. 3c).

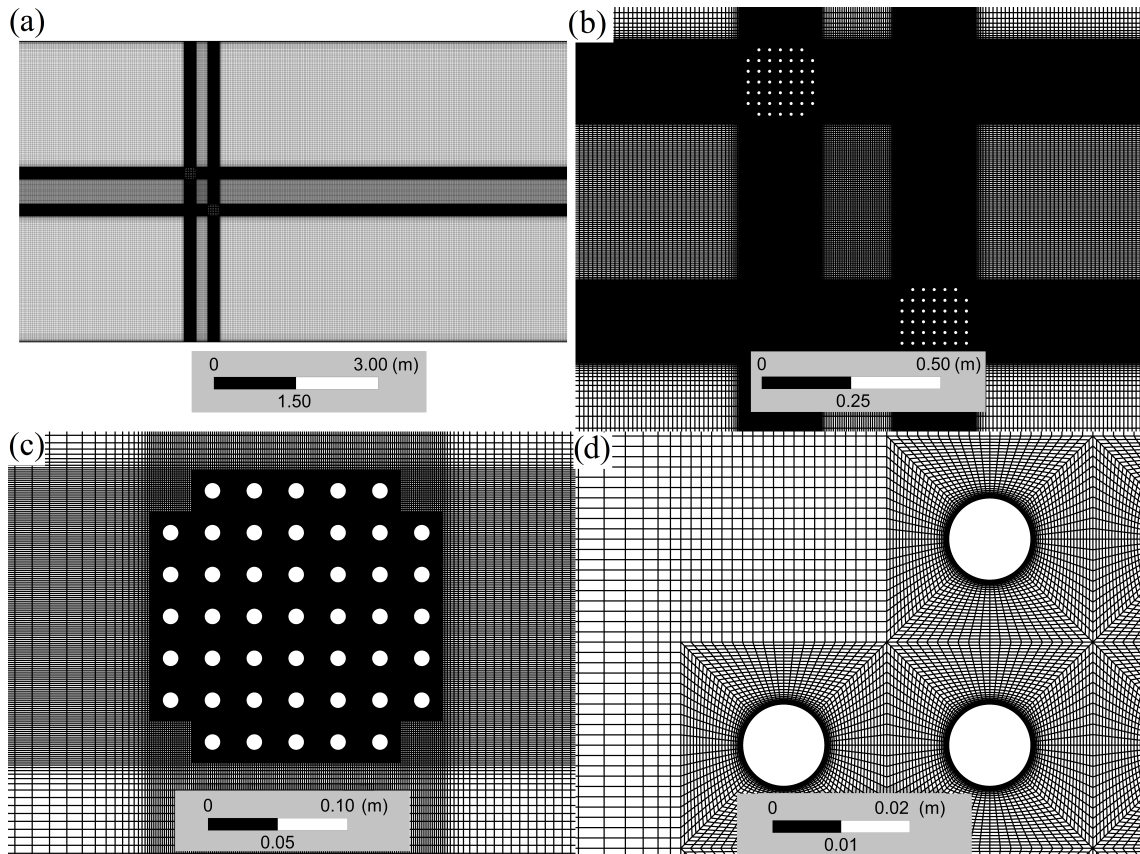
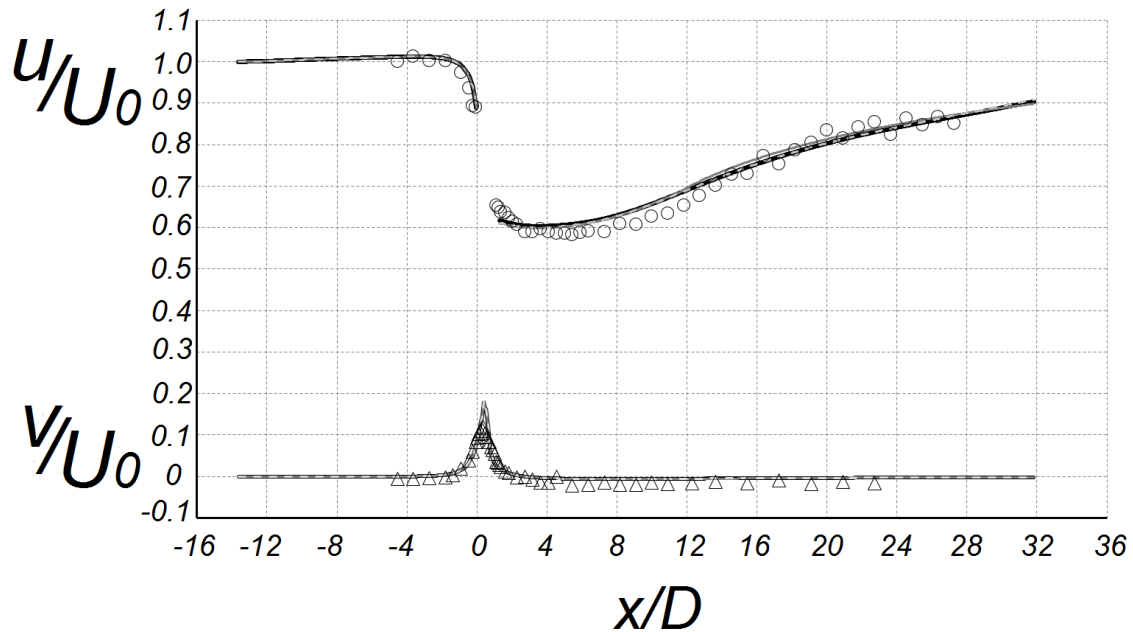


Fig. 3 Computational grid for the $L/D = 1$ and $T/D = 2$ case: (a) entire computational domain; (b) close-up view near the 2 patches; (c) close-up view near one patch; and (d) close-up view near the cylinders.

Boundary conditions were defined at the borders of the computation domain. A uniform flow was imposed at the inlet, with streamwise velocity $u = U_0$ and transverse velocity $v = 0$. At the outlet an average static reference pressure of 0 Pa was specified. The zero-pressure outlet boundary condition has been widely used to calculate the flow around bluff bodies (see e.g. Tian et al. [21]). A no-slip boundary condition was applied at the cylinder edges and the channel walls. Symmetry conditions were applied at the bottom and the surface of the channel.

The numerical model was validated using experimental measurements near a single patch in a laboratory channel [12]. The simulations represented a 10-m long and 1.2-m wide channel with imposed inflow velocity $U_0 = 9.5$ cm/s. A single circular patch of diameter $D = 22$ cm was placed 3m downstream from the channel entrance. To simplify the computational mesh, the computational cylinders were arranged into a square array, rather than a circular array used by Zong and Nepf [12]. This simplification is justified by experiments carried out by Vandenbruwaene et al. [7], who found that the flow field near square and circular arrays of the same diameter and stem density were very similar. The computational patch had 35 rigid cylinders ($n = 0.1$ cylinders cm^{-2}) of diameter 0.6 cm, producing a solid volume fraction of $\phi \approx 0.03$, which is the same used by Zong and Nepf [12]. The frontal area per volume was $a = nd \approx 0.06$ cm^{-1} . Streamwise profiles of time-mean velocity along the centerline of the patch show that the maximum difference between numerical and experimental results was 6% or less of the experimental measurement (Fig. 4). Figure 4 reveals that all three grids predictions were similar. Due to the limitation of available computational time, the coarse mesh was selected. It is important to note, as observed from comparison between experimental and numerical results in Figure 4, that the most significant steady wake characteristics can be captured with a steady RANS simulation.



199 **Fig.4** Comparison of the simulated time-mean streamwise velocity (u) along the centerline of the patch and
 200 transversal velocity (v) along the line $y=D/2$ with the experiment of Zong and Nepf (2011), open circles and open
 201 triangles for u and v , respectively. The boundaries of the patches lies between $0 < x/D < 1$. The maximum difference
 202 between numerical and experimental results was 6%. In both the numerical and physical experiment, the patch width
 203 was $D = 22$ cm, and the patch solid volume fraction was $\phi = 0.03$. Coarse grid, with 799600 elements (solid black
 204 lines); medium grid, with 1131000 elements (solid gray lines); fine grid, with 1605000 elements (dashed gray lines).
 205
 206

207 Regions of deposition are commonly associated with regions of diminished velocity
 208 [17, 22]. For example, the effect of velocity on deposition is illustrated by Hjulström's diagram
 209 [23], which relates deposition to velocity and particle size. Sediment is deposited when the
 210 velocity falls below the minimum velocity required to keep the particle in motion, which we call
 211 the threshold velocity. The threshold velocity is a function of sediment size, with smaller values
 212 associated with smaller grains. We used the threshold velocity to define the regions within
 213 which enhanced deposition would occur in the wake of the individual patches and patch pairs.
 214 Recognizing that the threshold velocity will depend on sediment size, we considered two
 215 thresholds, $u/U_0 < 0.7$ and 0.5 , representing coarser and finer material, respectively. Although
 216 we cannot connect these velocities to specific sediment sizes, they provide an exploratory test of
 217 how threshold velocity impacts the areal extent of enhanced deposition. In addition, the higher
 218 threshold ($u/U_0 < 0.7$) is correlated with the regions of enhanced net deposition observed in both
 219 Chen et al [16] and Meire et al. [17].

220 3. Results and Discussion

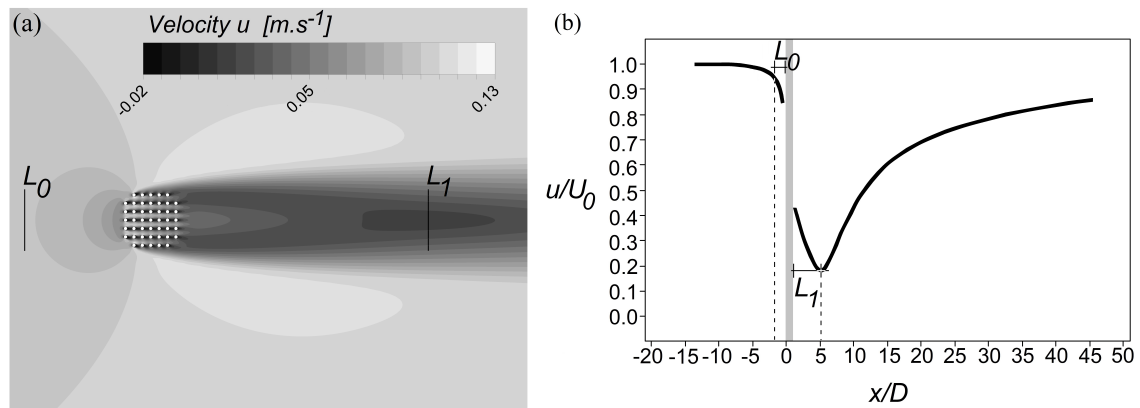
221 3.1 Flow pattern around a single patch

222 The velocity distribution for a single patch ($D = 22$ cm, $a = 0.13$ cm⁻¹) is shown in Fig.
 223 5. The diversion of flow began at $L_0 = 1.45D$ upstream of the patch, with L_0 defined as the
 224 distance upstream of the patch at which $\left| \frac{\partial(u/U_0)}{\partial(x/D)} \right| > 0.05$, which is consistent with results
 225 presented in Rominger and Nepf [11] of $L_0 = 2.0 (\pm 0.4) D$ and Zong and Nepf [12] of $L_0 \approx 1D$.
 226 The diversion of flow away from the vegetation patch led to acceleration along the vegetation
 227 edge, which is apparent in Fig. 5 as lobes of lighter shading on each side of the patch. Flow
 228 continued to divert laterally even within the patch, resulting in an area of low velocity directly

229 behind the patch, consistent with previous studies [9, 16]. The velocity directly downstream of
 230 the patch was $U_e = 0.40U_0$.

231 There was no recirculation zone behind the patch (specifically, no region of negative
 232 velocity), which is in agreement with Chen et al. [16], who note that there is no recirculation
 233 zone behind low-flow blockage patches ($C_{D\alpha}D < 4$).

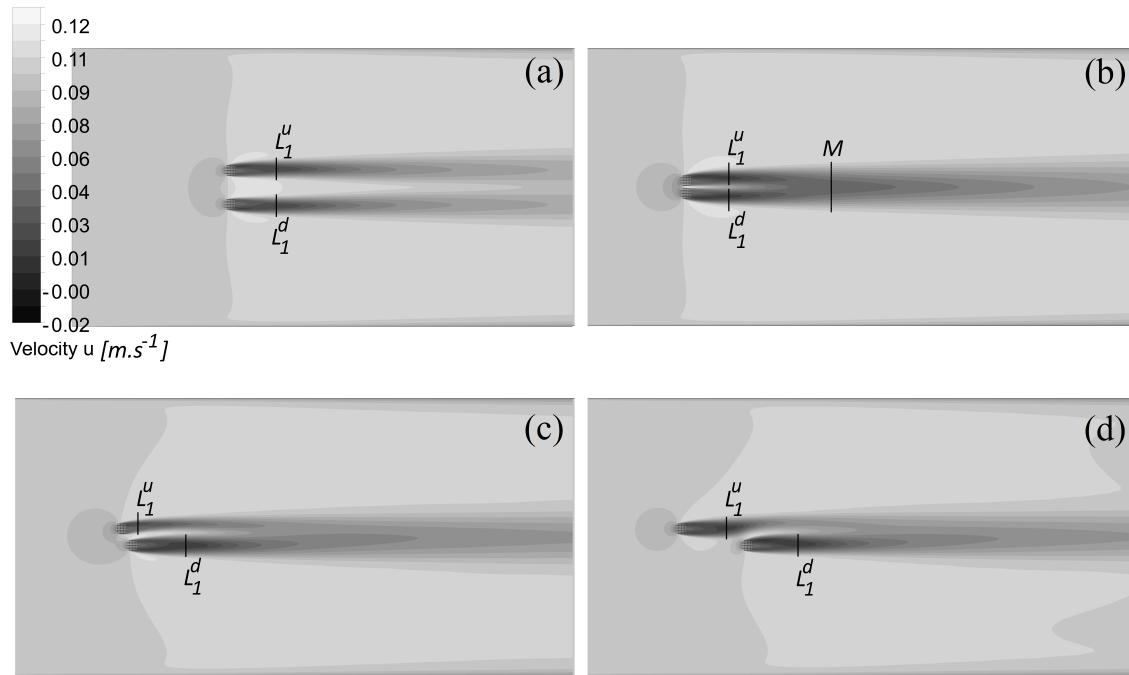
234 The region of low velocity behind the patch separated two regions of enhanced velocity,
 235 creating a shear layer on either side of the wake. The region of diminished velocity was
 236 maintained over a distance L_1 measured from the back of the patch. The wake length, L_1 , was
 237 defined as the distance along the patch centerline from the end of the patch to the point where
 238 the velocity began to increase. The dimensionless wake length obtained for our simulations was
 239 $L_1/D \approx 4.1$.



240 **Fig. 5** (a) Contour map of streamwise velocity (u) for a single patch of diameter $D = 22\text{cm}$, $a = 0.13\text{ cm}^{-1}$ and flow
 241 blockage $aD = 2.86$. The center of the patch is at $x = 0.5D$, $y = 0.75D$; (b) streamwise velocity (u) along the patch
 242 centerline noting the length-scales L_0 and L_1 .
 243

244 3.2 Flow pattern around two patches

245 The presence of a neighboring patch changes the wake structure, relative to that
 246 observed for an isolated patch (discussed in 3.1). We used the wake length, L_1 , to explore the
 247 influence of a neighboring patch for different lateral (L) and transverse (T) distances (Fig. 6).
 248 The superscripts u and d indicate, respectively, the upstream patch (L_1^u) and the downstream
 249 patch (L_1^d). The value for an isolated, single patch will remain as L_1 . Three different patterns for
 250 L_1 were identified, depending on the patch spacing, L/D and T/D : (i) single patch behavior, in
 251 which each of the two patches produced a wake that was close to that produced by a single,
 252 isolated patch. This behavior was defined by the following limits: $0.9 \leq L_1^u/L_1^d \leq 1.1$, $0.9 \leq$
 253 $L_1^u/L_1 \leq 1.1$ and $0.9 \leq L_1^d/L_1 \leq 1.1$; (ii) biased flow behavior, in which the lengths of the two
 254 wakes differed by more than 10% ($0 \leq L_1^u/L_1^d \leq 0.9$); (iii) diminished wake behavior, in which
 255 the lengths of the two wakes are equal, but smaller than the length behind an isolated patch (0.9
 256 $\leq L_1^u/L_1^d \leq 1.1$ and $L_1^u/L_1 \leq 0.9$ and $L_1^d/L_1 \leq 0.9$). These three flow patterns are now examined
 257 in more detail.



258
259
260
261
262

Fig. 6 u -velocity contours for (a) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 3$ (single patch behavior); (b) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 1.09$ (diminished wake behavior); (c) $L/D = 1$, $T/D = 1.5$ (biased flow behavior); (d) $L/D = 6$, $T/D = 1.5$ (biased flow behavior). M marks the longitudinal position at which the two wakes merge into one, as indicated by a velocity minimum in the longitudinal transect along the centerline between the two patches (M could be only defined for the case in Fig. 6b).

263 3.3 Flow pattern around side-by-side patches, $L/D = 0$

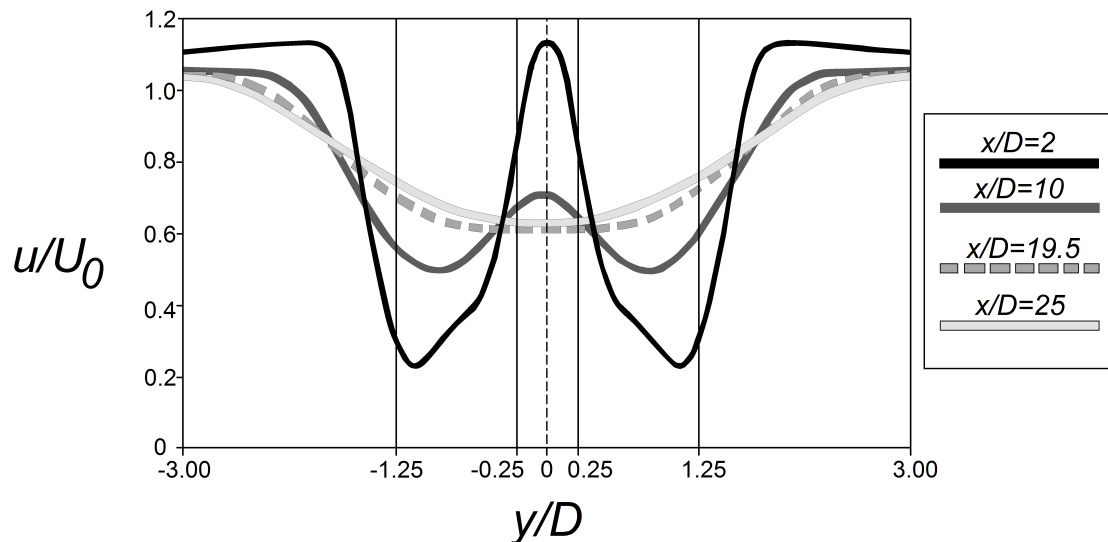
264 Figure 6a and 6b show u -velocity distributions for two cases ($T/D = 3$; $T/D = 1.09$) in a
265 side-by-side arrangement ($L/D = 0$). The upstream adjustment length (L_0) was a weak function
266 of lateral spacing, T , with $L_0 = 1.92D$ for $T/D = 1.09$ and $L_0 = 1.44D$ for $T/D = 2$. Recall that
267 $L_0/D = 1.45$ for single, isolated patch (Fig. 5). The values of L_0 observed for these side-by-side
268 arrangements were close to those measured by Meire et al. [17] of $L_0 = 1.7 (\pm 0.2) D$ over a
269 range of spacing ($T/D = 1$ to 1.6 , $L/D = 0$). Further, the values of L_0 observed for the side-by-
270 side arrangement agreed within uncertainty with Rominger and Nepf [11], who observed $L_0 =$
271 $2.0 \pm 0.4 D$ for individual patches. Thus, although our simulation suggested that L_0 increased by
272 30% as the spacing decreased to nearly zero ($T/D = 1.09$), the values were all within the range
273 observed for isolated patches, which suggests that there was no upstream interaction, i.e. the
274 presence of a neighboring patch did not significantly alter the distance upstream at which flow
275 begins to adjust to each patch.

276 For $L/D = 0$, the flow pattern was symmetric about $y = 0$ such that the near wake length-
277 scale (L_1) behind each patch was the same (Fig. 6a and 6b), but in these two cases was smaller
278 than that observed for an isolated patch ($L_1/D = 4.1$), which we call diminished wake behavior.
279 In addition, L_1 was a function of patch-spacing T . Specifically, $L_1/D = 3.40$ at $T/D = 1.09$ and
280 $L_1/D = 3.75$ at $T/D = 3.0$, i.e. as the patch-spacing increased the wake length-scale approached
281 that of an isolated patch, which makes physical sense. The parameter range (T/D) on which
282 diminished wake behavior occurs is discussed in more detail below in the context of Fig. 8.

283 The result that L_1 was shortened in a side-by-side configuration ($L/D = 0$) differed from
284 Meire et al. [17], who observed that L_1 for a pair of side-by-side patches was not significantly
285 altered from that of an isolated patch. This difference may be explained by the resolution of the
286 Meire measurements. In the Meire study the longitudinal distance between measurement points
287 was $0.55D$, a distance that roughly encompasses the variation observed in this study ($3.4D$ to

288 4.1D). Finally, for $L/D = 0$ flow acceleration between the patches was always present, even for
 289 $T/D = 1$, which is consistent with both Meire et al. [17] and Vandenbruwaene et al. [11].

290 Downstream from a pair of side-by-side patches, the flow field evolved in the
 291 streamwise direction from two side-by-side wakes to a single merged wake (e.g. $L/D = 0$, $T/D =$
 292 1.5 , Fig. 7). Close to the patch pair (e.g. $x/D = 2$) the profile showed two distinct wakes with
 293 local minimum velocity in-line with the individual patches and a maximum velocity on the
 294 centerline between the patches ($y = 0$). Farther downstream ($x/D > 2$), the centerline ($y=0$)
 295 velocity declined as the individual wakes merged, reaching the form of a single wake at $x/D =$
 296 19.5 . At this point, which we call the merging point M , the centerline velocity reached a
 297 minimum. Beyond this point ($x/D \geq 19.5$) the wake resembled that of a larger, single patch of
 298 scale $(D+L)$ with the minimum velocity in the lateral transect occurring at the centerline
 299 between the two patches. The wake merger (M) and centerline minimum velocity occurred
 300 closer to the patches as patch lateral space (T/D) decreased, consistent with the observations of
 301 Meire et al [17]. For example, the wake merger position (M) is visible within the frame for T/D
 302 $= 1.09$ (Fig. 6b), but occurs beyond the end of the frame for $T/D = 3$ (Fig. 6a). The merger
 303 position (M) and associated centerline velocity minimum have been shown experimentally to
 304 promote a local region of enhanced deposition on the centerline between the two patches.

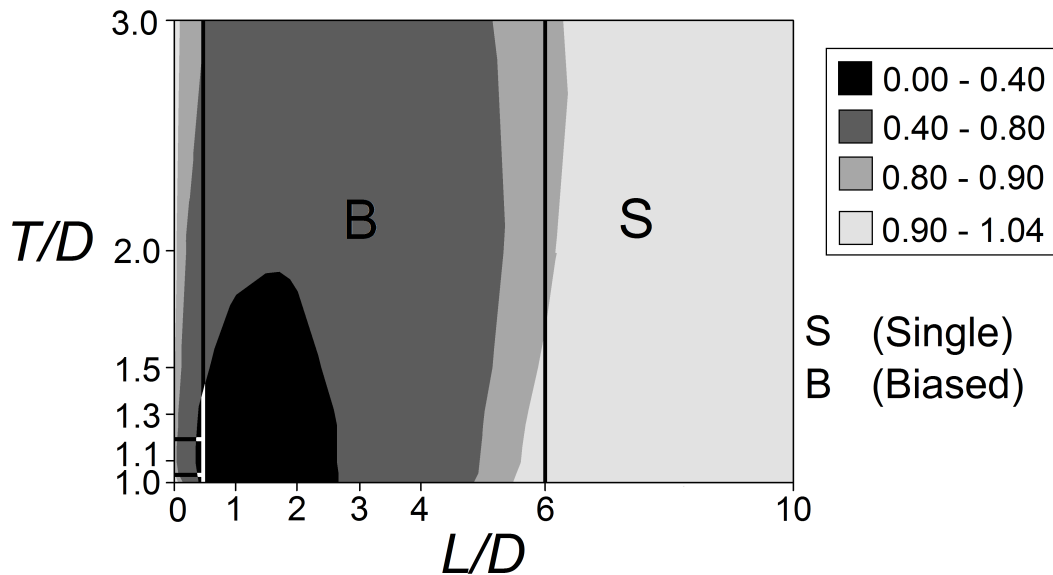


305 **Fig. 7** Lateral profiles of streamwise velocity (u) for $T/D = 1.5$ and $L/D = 0$ (side-by-side configuration). The dashed,
 306 vertical line indicates the centerline between the patches ($y = 0$), and the solid vertical lines represent the edges of the
 307 patches. At $x/D = 2$ and 10 , two distinct wakes were visible, with minimum velocity aligned with the centerline of
 308 each patch. At $x/D = 19.5$ and 25 the individual wakes have merged to form a wake that resembles that of a single
 309 object of total width $(D+L)$, with a minimum velocity at the centerline between the two patches ($y = 0$).
 310

311 3.4 Flow pattern around two staggered patches, $L/D > 0$.

312 Figure 6c and 6d illustrate two staggered configurations ($L/D > 0$). When the
 313 neighboring patches were staggered, the flow through the gap between the patches was
 314 deflected laterally toward the upstream patch, and this cut off the wake development of the
 315 upstream patch. As a result, the wake length of the upstream patch (L_i^u) was smaller than that
 316 for an isolated patch (L_i). The wake behind the downstream patch was essentially the same as
 317 an isolated patch (within 10%). As L/D increased, the deflection of gap flow decreased, and the
 318 upstream wake lengthened (L_i^u increased), until at $L/D = 6$, the upstream and downstream
 319 values for L_i were equal within 10%. This suggests that a downstream patch that occurs within
 320 $6D$ of an upstream neighbor can produce a negative feedback for the upstream patch by

321 diminishing the length of the near wake, from which we infer the length-scale of enhanced
 322 deposition and potential growth will also be diminished.



323
 324 **Fig. 8** Ratio of upstream to downstream wake length-scale, L_1^u/L_1^d , as a function of L/D and T/D . Regions of biased
 325 flow behavior (B) and single patch behavior (S) are marked. The boundaries were drawn at the half distance between
 326 simulated values of L/D and T/D . The diminished wake behavior was only observed for side-by-side patches ($L/D =$
 327 0) over the range $T/D = 1.09$ to 1.25 . For $L/D = 0$, $T/D > 1.25$, single patch behavior was observed.

328 The variation in the wake length-scale ratio L_1^u/L_1^d over the full range of lateral (L/D)
 329 and transverse (T/D) spacing is shown in Figure 8. These values were used to define the classes
 330 of wake behavior, as discussed in the previous paragraphs. In particular, the biased flow (B) and
 331 single patch (S) behavior is noted in Figure 8 with boundaries drawn at half the distance
 332 between the simulated values of L/D or T/D at which the transition was observed. We first
 333 consider the side-by-side configurations with $L/D = 0$. If the patches were spaced sufficiently far
 334 apart ($T/D > 1.25$), they behaved as two independent patches, with L_1 of each patch comparable
 335 to that of an isolated patch, i.e. single patch behavior. If the patches were at an intermediate
 336 spacing ($1.09 \leq T/D \leq 1.25$), the lengths of the two wakes are equal, but smaller than the length
 337 behind a single patch (diminished wake behavior). If the patches were touching ($T/D = 1$),
 338 single patch behavior was again observed ($L_1^u = L_1^d = L_1$).

339 For $L/D > 0$, when the patches were far from one other ($L/D > 6$), they exhibited single
 340 patch behavior (marked S in Fig. 8), i.e. there was no influence between the patches and $L_1^u =$
 341 $L_1^d = L_1$. If the patches were closer ($0 < L/D < 6$), biased flow occurred and the upstream wake
 342 was significantly shorter than the downstream wake and decreased in length as the spacing
 343 (L/D) decreased. The minimum value of $L_1^u/L_1^d = 0$ (i.e. the upstream patch had no near wake
 344 region) occurred for $L/D = 1$ and $T/D = 1$ to 1.25 .

345 3.5 Implied Deposition pattern

346 This section explores the possible influence of the velocity field on deposition patterns
 347 by delineating regions of potential net deposition based on two velocity thresholds, $u/U_0 < 0.5$
 348 and 0.7 . The potential deposition area was defined as the area within which the local velocity
 349 was below the chosen threshold. The deposition area for a single patch, A_1 , for $u/U_0 < 0.5$ and

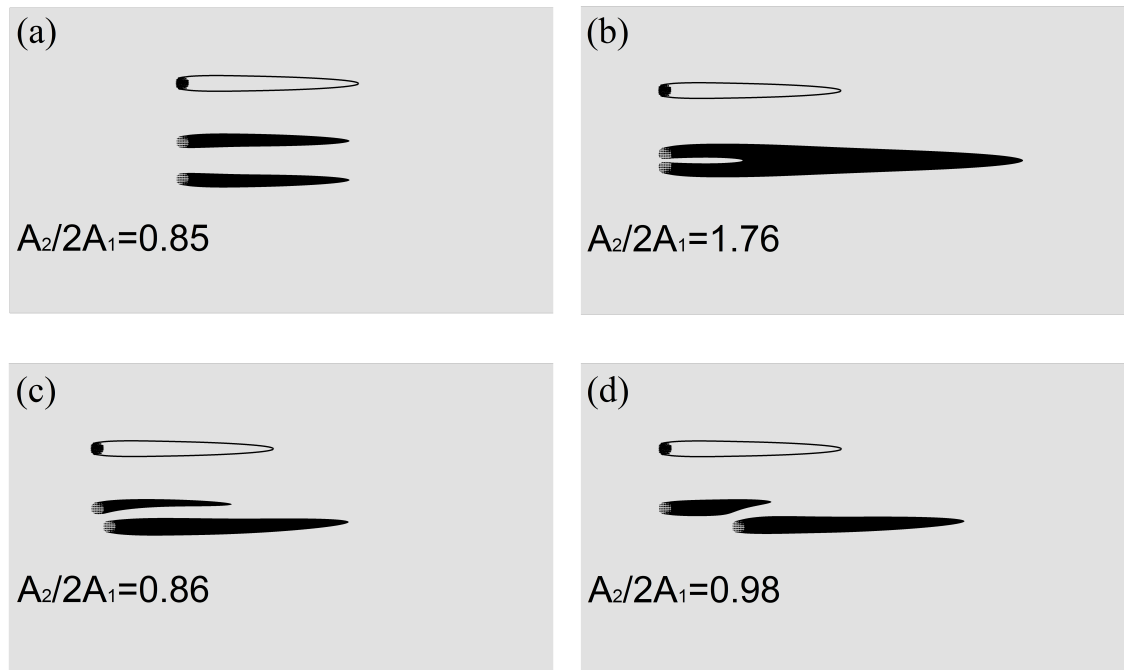
350 0.7, was $9.9D^2$ and $22.7D^2$, respectively, and was not a function of patch position (Fig. 9). These
 351 areas will be used as the reference values as we explore the interaction of two patches.



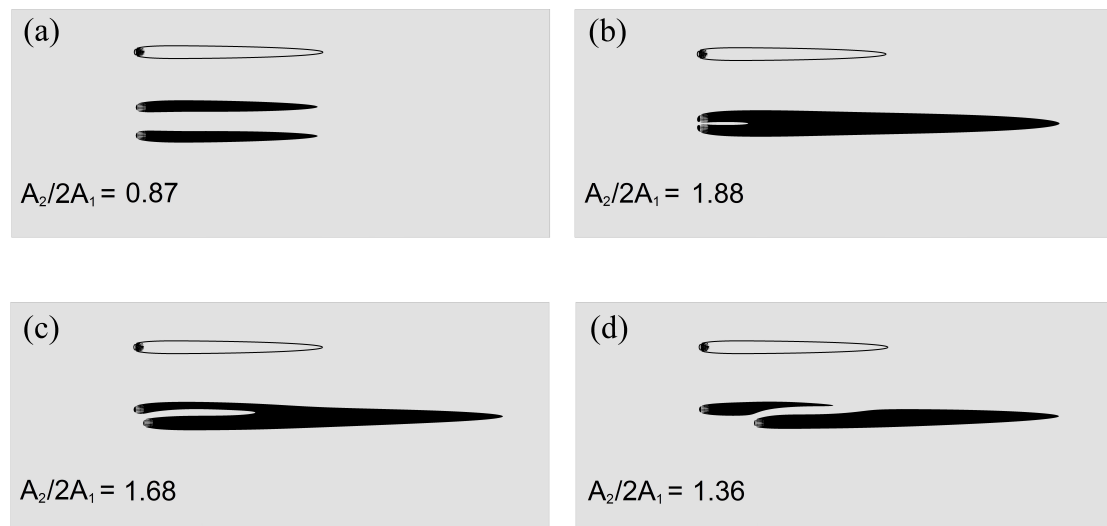
352
 353 **Fig. 9** The deposition area for a single patch (A_1) is identified by the black color for two threshold velocities: (a) u/U_0
 354 < 0.7 , $A_1 = 22.7D^2$; (b) $u/U_0 < 0.5$, $A_1 = 9.9D^2$.

355 For pairs of patches, the deposition area behind the upstream and downstream patch was
 356 denoted A_u and A_d , respectively, and the sum was defined as $A_2 = A_u + A_d$. Different deposition
 357 patterns were identified from the simulations, corresponding to the different flow patterns
 358 identified above. First, for single patch flow behavior, both patches have the same (within a
 359 10% margin) deposition area as an isolated patch. That is, $0.9 \leq A_u/A_1 \leq 1.1$; $0.9 \leq A_d/A_1 \leq 1.1$.
 360 This deposition pattern occurred when the two patches were far apart, so that no interaction
 361 between the two patches occurred, resulting in a single deposition zone behind each patch with
 362 an area the same as an isolated patch ($A_2/2A_1 \approx 1$). In this case, the presence of a neighboring
 363 patch produced no feedback.

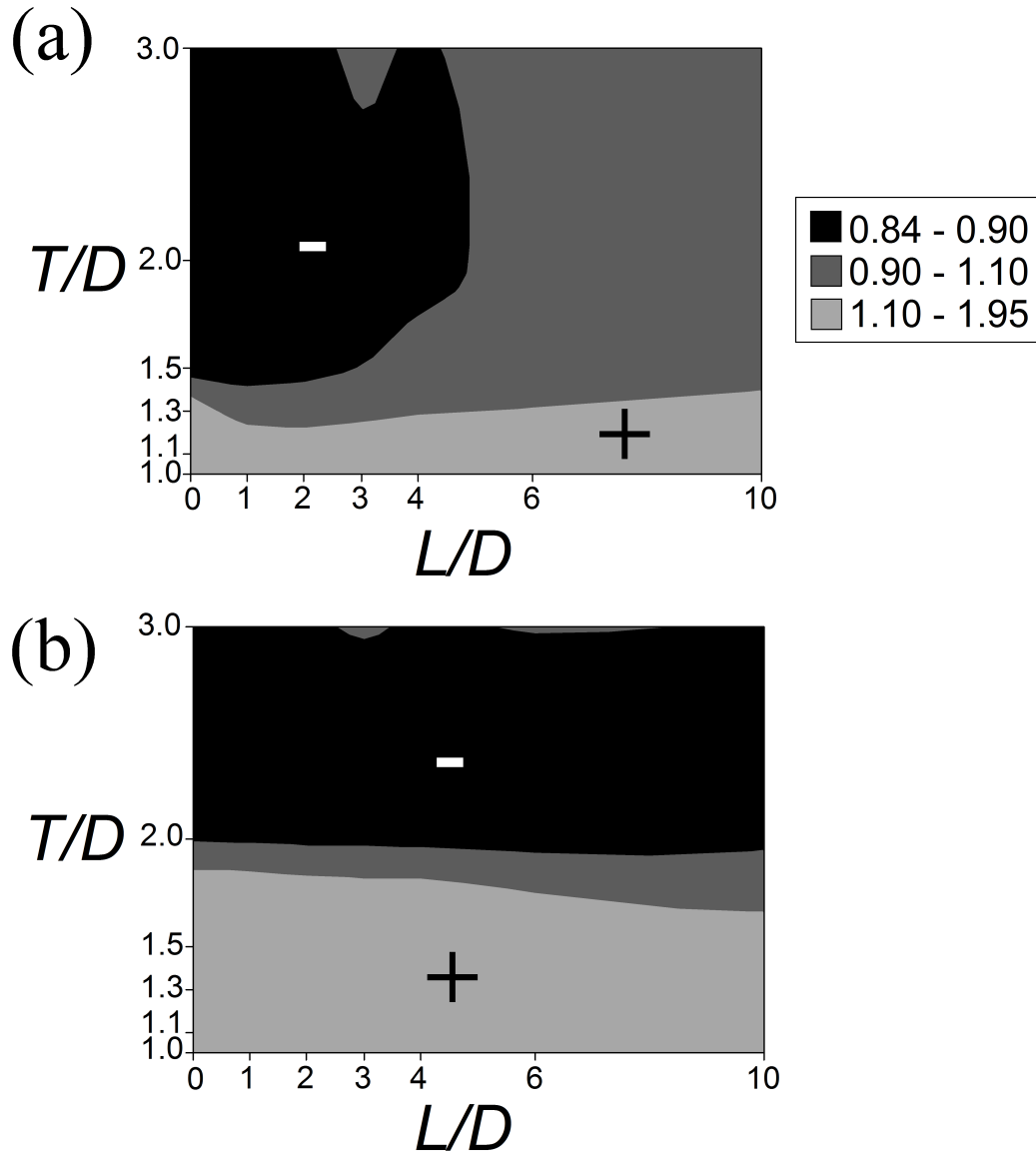
364 Second, when the two patches were located side-by-side ($L/D = 0$), A_u and A_d are equal
 365 (within 10%), but different from the area behind a single patch ($0.9 \leq A_u/A_d \leq 1.1$; $A_d/A_1 \leq 0.9$
 366 or $A_d/A_1 \geq 1.1$; $A_u/A_1 \leq 0.9$ or $A_u/A_1 \geq 1.1$). Two types of deposition pattern were observed for
 367 patches in a side-by-side configuration ($L/D = 0$): with a secondary deposition zone (Fig. 10b
 368 and 11b) and without a secondary deposition zone (Fig. 10a and 11a). In both cases the total
 369 deposition area with two patches (A_2) was different from that of two isolated patches ($A_2/2A_1 \neq$
 370 1). When there was no secondary deposition zone (Fig. 10a and 11a), the deposition area of the
 371 two patches were equal, but less than the area behind a single patch, so that $A_2/2A_1 < 1$.
 372 Neighboring patches in this configuration produced a negative feedback, because a neighboring
 373 patch diminished the overall deposition, compared to two isolated patches. When a secondary
 374 deposition zone was present, the total deposition area of the two patches was greater than two
 375 individual patches ($A_2/2A_1 > 1$, Fig. 10b and 11b). Neighboring patches in this configuration
 376 provided a positive feedback, because the neighboring patch enhanced the overall deposition
 377 and potential for new growth. The leading edge of the secondary deposition zone moved closer
 378 to the patches as T decreased, consistent with the experimental deposition patterns obtained by
 379 Meire et al. [17]. As suggested by Meire et al. [17], if the zones of secondary deposition
 380 promote growth, the new vegetation on the centerline could block flow on the centerline,
 381 eventually leading to a merger of the original patches into a larger vegetated structure.



382
 383 **Fig. 10** Deposition areas identified by the black color for $u/U_0 < 0.5$. A_1 is the deposition area produced by an isolated
 384 patch and A_2 is the total deposition area created with two patches. (a) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 3$; (b) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 1.09$; (c)
 385 $L/D = 1$, $T/D = 1.5$; (d) $L/D = 6$, $T/D = 1.5$. Each subplot indicates the single-patch deposition area with an open
 386 contour. The total deposition area with two patches, A_2 , is compared to that expected for two isolated patches ($2A_1$).
 387 When $A_2/2A_1 > 1$, the neighboring patches provide a positive feedback to growth by creating a larger footprint of
 388 deposition than occurs for two isolated patches. When $A_2/2A_1 < 1$, the neighboring patches provide a negative
 389 feedback by diminishing the footprint of deposition, compared to two isolated patches.



390
 391 **Fig. 11** Deposition areas identified by the black color for $u/U_0 < 0.7$. A_1 is the deposition area produced by an isolated
 392 patch and A_2 is the total deposition area created with two patches. (a) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 3$; (b) $L/D = 0$, $T/D = 1.09$; (c)
 393 $L/D = 1$, $T/D = 1.5$; (d) $L/D = 6$, $T/D = 1.5$. Each subplot indicates the single-patch deposition area with an open
 394 contour. The total deposition area with two patches, A_2 , is compared to that expected for two isolated patches ($2A_1$).
 395 When $A_2/2A_1 > 1$, the neighboring patches provide a positive feedback to growth by creating a larger footprint of
 396 deposition than occurs for two isolated patches. When $A_2/2A_1 < 1$, the neighboring patches provide a negative
 397 feedback by diminishing the footprint of deposition, compared to two isolated patches.



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Fig. 12 Dependence on L/D and T/D of the nondimensional deposition area, $A_2/2A_1$ for deposition defined by two velocity thresholds: (a) $u/U_0 < 0.5$; (b) $u/U_0 < 0.7$. The plus (“+”) and minus (“-”) signs indicate, respectively, positive and negative feedbacks due to the presence of a neighboring patch.

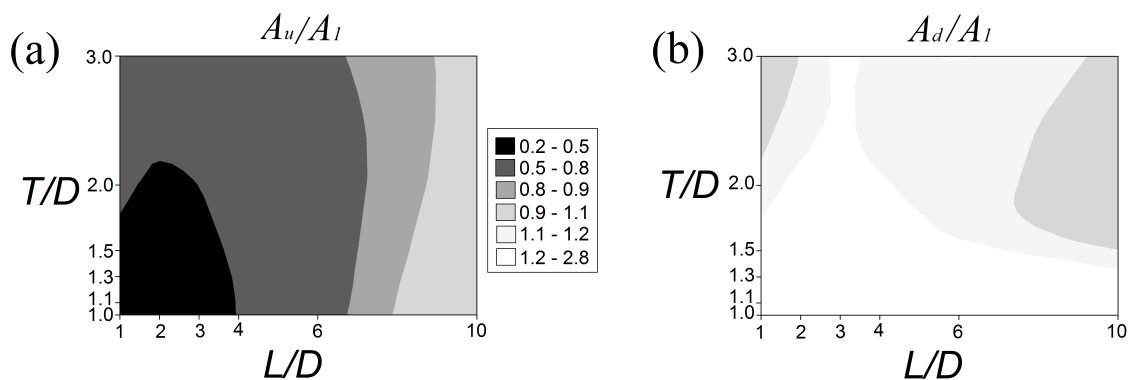
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Third, for cases with biased flow behavior, two deposition patterns were observed: with a secondary deposition zone (Fig. 11c) and without a secondary deposition zone (Fig. 10c, 10d and 11d). In the later case (11d), the deposition zone behind the upstream patch was smaller than that behind an isolated patch ($A_u < A_1$), so that the downstream neighbor provided a negative feedback to growth for the upstream patch. In contrast, there was an increase in deposition area behind the downstream patch compared to a single patch ($A_d > A_1$), i.e. an upstream neighbor enhanced (positive feedback) the growth potential of the downstream patch.

Figure 12 summarizes the tendencies for positive (light grey) and negative (black) feedbacks associated with different patch-to-patch spacing for both velocity thresholds. We first consider the $u/U_0 < 0.5$ threshold (top subplot). For the side-by-side configurations ($L = 0$), unless the patches were nearly touching ($T/D < 1.5$), neighboring patches produced a negative feedback ($A_2/2A_1 < 0.9$). The negative feedback was observed for lateral spacing as large as $T/D = 8$, but for larger spacing we expect the deposition to return to single-patch behavior ($A_2/2A_1 = 1.0 \pm 0.1$). On the other hand, when the patches had a small lateral spacing ($T/D < 1.3$), a

416 positive feedback ($A_2/2A_1 > 1.1$) was observed for all longitudinal spacing considered (grey
 417 region along x -axis). The maximum feedback ($A_2/2A_1 = 1.95$) occurred at ($L/D = 0, T/D = 1$).
 418 For patches separated by more than $L/D = 5$ and $T/D = 1.5$, there was no feedback, and the
 419 deposition area was essential that same as that produced by two isolated patches ($A_2/2A_1 = 1.0 \pm$
 420 0.1 , medium grey region in Fig. 12a). When we considered a higher threshold velocity ($u/U_0 <$
 421 0.7 , Fig. 12b), both the positive and negative patch interactions became stronger, i.e. positive
 422 and negative feedbacks both occurred over a larger L - T parameter space. The expansion of the
 423 positive feedback region occurred because with a higher threshold velocity weaker patch
 424 interactions are needed to depress the velocity below this threshold, and these weaker
 425 interactions can occur at larger patch spacing. The enlargement of the negative feedback
 426 parameter space is related to the fact that the deposition area of an isolate patch (A_1) increases
 427 (due to a higher threshold velocity), shifting the ratio $A_2/2A_1$. Recognizing that a smaller
 428 threshold velocity is associated with smaller grain size, the comparison between Figure 12a and
 429 12b suggests that patch-interaction has a weaker impact on finer suspended loads.

430 To illustrate the different feedbacks observed for the upstream and downstream patches,
 431 Figure 13 shows the dependence on L/D and T/D of the nondimensional upstream deposition
 432 area, A_u/A_1 , and the nondimensional downstream deposition area, A_d/A_1 for the $u/U_0 < 0.5$
 433 threshold. We can only discuss the lower threshold velocity, because for $u/U_0 < 0.7$, the
 434 secondary deposition zones often merged with the primary deposition zones, making it
 435 impossible to define A_u and A_d separately for all T/D and L/D arrangements. We particularly
 436 focus on the feedbacks for staggered patch configurations ($L/D \geq 1$). Due to the biased flow
 437 described in section 3.4, the deposition zone of the upstream patch was always diminished,
 438 relative to an isolated patch, with the greatest reduction ($A_u/A_1 = 0.24$) occurring at $L/D = 1, T/D$
 439 $= 1$ (Fig. 13a). As the longitudinal spacing (L) increased, this negative feedback gradual
 440 declined and disappeared for $L/D > \approx 8$, i.e. $A_u/A_1 = 1.0 \pm 0.1$ for $L/D > 8$. The deposition zone
 441 associated with the downstream patch was always enhanced, with maximum enhancement
 442 ($A_d/A_1 = 2.79$) occurring for $L/D = 1$ and $T/D = 1$. For patches with lateral spacing less than
 443 $1.3D$, the enhanced deposition area occurred for all longitudinal spacing considered. Notably,
 444 the positive feedback for the downstream patch extended over larger patch spacing than the
 445 negative feedback on the upstream patch. For patches with lateral spacing greater than $1.5D$, the
 446 feedback was eliminated at longitudinal spacing around $L/D = 8$, similar to the limit of influence
 447 on the upstream patch.



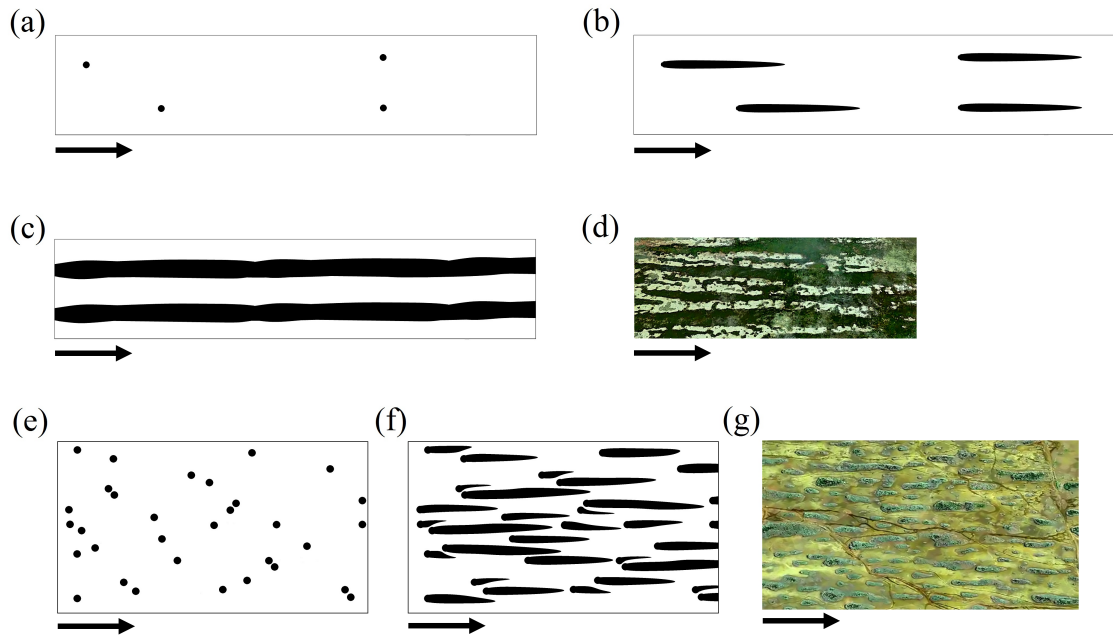
448
 449 **Fig. 13** Nondimensional deposition area as a function of L/D and T/D for $u/U_0 < 0.5$: (a) A_u/A_1 , nondimensional
 450 upstream patch deposition area; (b) A_d/A_1 , nondimensional downstream patch deposition area.

451 **3.6 Implications for large-scale landscape evolution**

452 The numerical study of two-patch interactions can provide some insight into large-scale
453 landscape evolution. We specifically compared two scenarios, one for which the initial patch
454 spacing was large enough to produce no patch-to-patch feedback, and one for which the initial
455 patch-to-patch spacing was small enough to produced strong feedbacks. The initial state for the
456 first scenario is shown in Fig. 14a. The longitudinal and transverse spacing between the patches
457 was sufficient ($T/D > 8$, $L/D > 8$) to initially produce, a deposition zone similar to an isolated
458 patch behind each individual patch (Fig. 14b). If the patches grew into these deposition regions,
459 the individual patches lengthen, but do not widen. Meanwhile, due to flow diversion away from
460 the patches, the flow between the patches is elevated, which inhibits patch expansion and
461 maintains these bare regions (e.g. see discussion of the influence of bare regions in [17]). We
462 conjecture that the patches will continue to grow only in the streamwise direction, eventually
463 forming a landscape dominated by flow-parallel regions of vegetation and channel (Fig. 14c).
464 This configuration is likely to be stable, because the high velocities in the bare adjacent areas
465 inhibit expansion of vegetation into these zones. Thus, we conjecture that the vegetation will
466 evolve to a state characterized by relatively stable channels and well-defined vegetated regions
467 (with a width of the order of D) (see Fig. 14c). The end pattern of this scenario is similar to
468 observations from the field and previous numerical simulations. For example, Bernhardt and
469 Willard [24] observed, in the Florida Everglades, a landscape characterized by longitudinally
470 oriented ridges of vegetation and open-water sloughs (see Fig. 3 in [24]). Through process-
471 based numerical modeling, Larsen and Harvey [6] have also reproduced a landscape with
472 parallel preferential flow channels (see the category “Parallel Preferential Flow Channels” in
473 [6], Fig. 1). Fig. 14d presents an actual landscape from the Florida Everglades ($26^{\circ}09'45.6''N$
474 $80^{\circ}40'21.9''W$), obtained from Google Maps, which closely resembles the final state proposed
475 in Fig. 14c.

476 In the second scenario (Fig. 14e), the patches were initially placed close enough that
477 patch-to-patch feedbacks would occur, specifically the initial patch spacing fell in the parameter
478 space (L , T) for biased flow (Fig. 11) and negative feedbacks to the upstream patch (Fig. 13a).
479 We assumed that the deposition behind each patch would depend only on the position of its
480 nearest neighbor vegetation patch. For example, if patch A was located at $x = 0$ and $y = 0$ and
481 the nearest downstream vegetation patch B was $x = 6D$ and $y = 1.5D$, then the deposition area
482 behind patch A was assumed to follow that observed numerically for a pair of patches separated
483 by $L/D = 6$ and $T/D = 1.5$, e.g. as shown in Figure 11d. Letting the vegetation patches in Figure
484 14e grow into their respective deposition areas yields the new landscape shown in Fig. 14f. The
485 accelerate flows between the patches may limit further patch growth, so that the landscape
486 evolves to a mosaic of small patches of different patch length, but generally elongated parallel
487 to the flow. A distribution of patch sizes aligned preferentially to the flow (as shown in Fig. 14f)
488 is consistent with observations of freshwater macrophyte distributions in a lowland river in
489 Belgium [25] and in Scotland [26]. Larsen and Harvey [6] produced a similar landscape pattern
490 within their landscape evolution model (see the category “Small Elongated Islands” in [6], Fig.
491 1). Finally, Figure 14g presents an actual landscape from Florida Everglades ($26^{\circ}01'35.2''N$
492 $80^{\circ}50'19.1''W$), obtained from Google Maps, which closely resemble our second scenario.

493 The two scenarios consider here highlight the potential role of initial patch spacing on
494 landscape patterns. If pioneer vegetation is sparsely distributed (patch spacing larger than $10D$),
495 the feedback to deposition and additional plant growth may tend toward a channeled landscape
496 (Fig. 14d). If the pioneer vegetation is densely distributed (patch spacing less than $6D$, based on
497 Fig. 13), patch interaction tends to shorten the deposition zones, limiting patch expansion,
498 resulting in a mosaic of patch sizes generally elongated in the streamwise direction (Fig. 14f).



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Fig. 14 (a)-(c). Evolution of a vegetated landscape starting from sparsely distributed pioneer vegetation. (a) Initial longitudinal and transverse spacing between the patches is sufficient to produce no patch-to-patch interaction. (b) Deposition area added behind each patch is the same as that behind an isolated patch (c) Conjectured final landscape characterized by relatively stable channels (bare regions) and well-defined vegetated regions. (d) A landscape (26°09'45.6"N 80°40'21.9"W), obtained from Google Maps, which closely resembles conjectured landscape in (c). (e)-(f). Evolution of a vegetated landscape starting from (e) closely distributed pioneer vegetation. The initial spacing is small enough ($L/D < 6$) to limit the wake growth and deposition areas of each patch, yielding a distribution of small patches as a final state (f) characterized by elongated vegetation patches oriented parallel to the flow. (g) An actual landscape (26°01'35.2"N 80°50'19.1"W), obtained from Google Maps, which closely resemble (f).

509 4 Conclusions

510 This study examined the flow field and inferred deposition patterns around two nearby
511 circular patches of vegetation using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD). The following
512 trends were observed for the threshold velocity $u/U_0 < 0.5$. When the two patches were far from
513 each other ($L/D > 8$, $T/D > 8$), wake interaction was weak and flow and deposition patterns
514 around each patch resembled those of a single, isolated patch. When the two patches were close
515 enough ($L/D < 8$, $T/D < 8$), both positive and negative feedbacks to wake scale and inferred
516 deposition area were observed. For side-by-side patches ($L/D = 0$), the total deposition area was
517 enhanced (positive feedback) for small gaps ($L/D < 1.5$) but diminished (negative feedback) for
518 large gaps ($T/D > 1.5$, based on Fig. 12a). For staggered patches ($L/D \geq 1$), the flow between the
519 patches deflected lateral toward the upstream patch, which shortened the upstream patch wake
520 and diminished its deposition area, relative to an isolated patch (negative feedback). The
521 downstream patch in a staggered pair exhibited a positive feedback, with the wake length and
522 deposition area both enhanced, relative to an isolated patch. The interaction between staggered
523 patches may explain the landscape consisting of a distribution of small patch sizes generally
524 aligned with the flow (Fig. 14g) which is often observed in rivers.

525

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532

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