

**1 Estimating the Effect of Earth Elasticity and Variable Water**  
**2 Density on Tsunami Speeds**

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3 The speed of tsunami waves is typically calculated using the shallow-water  
4 approximation over a rigid-body Earth. Recent comparisons of tsunami arrival  
5 times from the March 11, 2011 tsunami suggest, however, that the standard for-  
6 mulation has errors around the one percent level, and it has been suggested that  
7 the elasticity of the Earth can explain the discrepancy. While previous work has  
8 indeed shown that such elastic deformation can modify tsunami speeds, the ef-  
9 fect has been neglected partly due to the difficulty in understanding how large  
10 this elastic effect is. Here, we remedy this by providing a new derivation and  
11 expression for how to incorporate the first-order effect that solid Earth elastic-  
12 ity and ocean water compressibility has on tsunami speeds. This result is shown  
13 to agree approximately with previous theory, and helps to explain observed tim-  
14 ing discrepancies from the March 11, 2011 tsunami. The dispersive elastic cor-  
15 rection and the non-dispersive compressibility correction together may account  
16 for the majority of the observed discrepancy.

## 1. Introduction

17 The theory for understanding tsunami wave propagation has been well known since at least  
18 1845 [Airy, 1845; Thomson, 1887; Takahasi, 1943, 1949; Murty, 1977]. The classical theory  
19 treats the problem of gravity waves in a uniform ocean of arbitrary depth, from which the  
20 tsunami solution can be derived as the shallow water wave approximation to the full solution.  
21 Although a few authors have pointed to a few potential deficiencies in the standard theory [e.g.,  
22 *DeDontney and Rice*, 2011], the vast majority of the tsunami modeling community relies on  
23 this standard (nonlinear) shallow water formulation, in which the local tsunami phase speed,  $c$ ,  
24 is non-dispersive and given by  $\sqrt{gH}$  where  $g$  is the acceleration of gravity and  $H$  is the local  
25 ocean depth [Ward, 1980; Titov and Synolakis, 1998; Titov et al., 2005; Simons et al., 2011].

26 However, recently, it has been noticed that far-field observations of tsunamis, including those  
27 from the 2010 Maule Earthquake and the 2011 Tohoku-Oki Earthquake, have main arrivals  
28 that are later than expected from the standard theory [*Simons et al.*, 2011; *Watada et al.*, 2011;  
29 *Kusumoto et al.*, 2011; *Yamazaki et al.*, 2012; *Grilli et al.*, 2012; *Kusumoto et al.*, 2012]. Yet  
30 even though there exist theoretical frameworks [*Sells*, 1965; *Ward*, 1980; *Okal*, 1982; *Comer*,  
31 1984; *Lynett and Liu*, 2004] which suggest various potential improvements to the standard the-  
32 ory, the relative complexity of these formulations makes it challenging to understand what ef-  
33 fect is most important and what this effect is most sensitive to. To address this issue, here we  
34 present a new derivation for the effect of solid Earth elasticity and ocean water compressibil-  
35 ity on tsunami wave speeds. The elastic correction to tsunami phase velocity is shown to be  
36 proportional to wavelength, inversely proportional to an average shear modulus, and has no  
37 dependence on ocean depth. Inclusion of this correction seems to explain a significant part of

38 the difference between observed and modeled tsunami waveforms from the two recent earth-  
39 quakes mentioned previously, especially at relatively long wavelengths. The correction is also  
40 shown to be consistent, to first order, with the results of *Comer* [1984], but the present result  
41 has the advantage that it highlights the physical mechanism responsible for the correction in  
42 a straightforward way. Agreement with observations is found to be significantly improved af-  
43 ter also accounting for the correction from ocean water density increasing with depth due to  
44 compressibility.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Basic Theory

45 In any conservative mechanical system, the total energy,  $E$ , remains constant, and can be  
46 written as  $E = U + T$  where  $U$  is potential energy and  $T$  is kinetic energy. Energy oscillates  
47 between  $U$  and  $T$ , with the sum not changing. In the simplest case, a single parameter,  $\xi$ , can be  
48 used to define the state of the system, where  $\xi$  often signifies a displacement, and  $\xi$  undergoes  
49 simple harmonic motion. In such a case,  $U = 1/2 \cdot K \cdot \xi^2$  and  $T = 1/2 \cdot M \cdot (d\xi/dt)^2$ , where  
50  $K$  is an effective stiffness,  $M$  is an effective mass and  $t$  is time. For example, for a simple  
51 spring-block system,  $\xi$  is displacement of the block,  $K$  is the spring's elastic constant, and  $M$   
52 is the mass of the block. The frequency of oscillation,  $\omega$ , in such a system can be expressed as  
53  $\omega^2 = K/M$ .

### 2.2. Theory Applied to the Standard Tsunami Problem with Rigid Bottom

54 As has been shown previously [e.g., *Lighthill*, 1978; *Stevenson*, 2005], the basic theory de-  
55 scribed in Section 2.1 can be used to derive the standard (linear shallow water) tsunami dis-  
56 persion relation and speed. We summarize this simple derivation here. The ocean is assumed

57 to be of fixed water depth  $H$  at rest, and  $h(x, t) = \xi(t) \cos(kx)$  is taken to be the vertical dis-  
 58 placement of the sea surface. As shown in Fig. 1,  $\xi$  is the amplitude of the sinusoidal wave,  
 59  $k$  is the wavenumber, and  $x$  is position in the direction of wave propagation. (In this analysis,  
 60 although the wave is assumed to be a standing wave, a propagating wave can be constructed as  
 61 a superposition of 2 standing waves.) From this picture of shallow water waves ( $kH \ll 1$ ), we  
 62 first note that horizontal velocities,  $\dot{u} \equiv \partial u / \partial t$ , are approximately uniform with depth and can  
 63 be determined by mass conservation. In an incompressible ocean, this leads to

$$64 \quad H\dot{u}(x) = - \int_0^x \dot{h}(s) ds = - \frac{\sin(kx)}{k} \frac{d\xi}{dt}. \quad (1)$$

65 Since vertical velocities,  $\dot{w}$ , are of order  $d\xi/dt$  and since  $kH \ll 1$ , Eq. (1) shows that  $\dot{u} \gg \dot{w}$   
 66 (by a factor of  $1/(kH)$ ) so that vertical velocities can be safely ignored in computations of  $T$ .  
 67 With this approximation, both  $U$  and  $T$  can be calculated by direct integration. Per unit area,  
 68 averaged over a wavelength, we have

$$69 \quad U = U_0 \equiv \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \rho g(H + h) \cdot \frac{h}{2} dx = \frac{\rho g \xi^2}{4}, \quad (2)$$

70 and

$$71 \quad T \approx \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \frac{\rho H \dot{u}^2}{2} dx = \frac{\rho H}{4(kH)^2} \cdot \left( \frac{d\xi}{dt} \right)^2, \quad (3)$$

72 where  $\rho$  is water density,  $g$  is the acceleration of gravity, and  $U$  is referenced to the center of  
 73 mass of the undisturbed ocean. We can therefore identify  $K = K_0 \equiv \rho g/2$ ,  $M = \rho H/(2k^2 H^2)$ ,  
 74 so that  $\omega^2 = gHk^2$ . From this dispersion relation, one can then calculate phase velocity as

$$75 \quad c \equiv \omega/k = \sqrt{gH} \equiv c_0, \quad (4)$$

76 and we recover the standard expression for tsunami wave propagation speed. (Similarly, group  
 77 velocity  $c_g = \partial\omega/\partial k = \sqrt{gH}$ .)

### 2.3. Tsunami Problem with an Elastic Substrate

78 It is straightforward to extend the analysis of Section 2.2 to account for elasticity of the  
 79 substrate rather than having a rigid ocean bottom (see Fig. 1). For this new problem, all that  
 80 must be done is to calculate a new expression for  $U$  and  $T$  that accounts for elastic deformation  
 81 of the substrate. In the following paragraphs, we will find that to a first approximation,  $T$  is  
 82 unchanged whereas  $U = U_0 + U_e + \Delta U_0$  where  $U_0$  is the standard tsunami energy of Eq. (2),  $U_e$   
 83 is an elastic energy stored in the elastic medium due to the added pressure from the water wave,  
 84 and  $\Delta U_0$  is a correction term that accounts for the extra energy of the ocean due to displacement  
 85 of the ocean floor. Once a new  $U$  and  $T$  are calculated, we perform the same identification of  
 86  $K$  and  $M$  to calculate  $\omega$  and  $c$  as in Section 2.2. Note that hereafter  $h$  denotes the perturbation  
 87 of the total water column depth,  $\xi$  its sinusoidal amplitude, and  $w_s$  the vertical displacement of  
 88 the seafloor.

89 To determine  $U_e$ , we solve the static elasticity problem of periodic (excess) pressure loading  
 90 of

$$91 \quad p(x) = \rho g \xi \cos(kx). \quad (5)$$

92 For the simplest case of an elastic halfspace, the solution for surface displacement is well known  
 93 and given by *Jeffreys* [1976] as

$$94 \quad w_s(x) = -\frac{(1 - \nu)\rho g \xi \cos(kx)}{\mu k}, \quad (6)$$

95 where  $\mu$  is the shear modulus and  $\nu$  is the Poisson's ratio of the elastic medium. Eq. (6) is valid  
 96 for the problem of interest so long as  $w_s \ll h$ , which is indeed the case over the entire range  
 97 of relevant parameter space (see values listed later).  $U_e$  (per unit area, as before) can then be

98 calculated as

$$99 \quad U_e = \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \frac{-p(x)w_s(x)}{2} dx = \frac{(1-\nu)\rho^2 g^2 \xi^2}{4\mu k}. \quad (7)$$

100 With  $w_s(x)$  given by Eq. (6),  $\Delta U_0$  can be calculated as

$$101 \quad \Delta U_0 = \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \rho g [H + h(x)] w_s(x) dx = -2U_e, \quad (8)$$

102 and so  $U = U_0 - U_e$ . We therefore find

$$103 \quad K = \frac{\rho g}{2} \left[ 1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k} \right]. \quad (9)$$

104 For the opposite extreme end-member, where the elastic zone is of thickness  $H_e \ll 1/k$  (and  
105 is rigid underneath), the same pressure loading of Eq. (5) results in effectively one-dimensional  
106 loading (i.e. all strains are zero except for vertical strains), in which case

$$107 \quad w_s(x) = w_{H_e}(x) \equiv -\frac{(1-2\nu)\rho g H_e \xi \cos(kx)}{2(1-\nu)\mu}, \quad (10)$$

108 and

$$109 \quad K = K_{H_e} \equiv \frac{\rho g}{2} \left[ 1 - \frac{(1-2\nu)\rho g H_e}{2(1-\nu)\mu} \right]. \quad (11)$$

110 For a layered elastic halfspace, the solution is more complicated and, in general, must be  
111 numerically calculated. However, we note that a fair approximation may be obtained by using  
112 Eq. (9) where  $(1-\nu)/\mu$  is taken as a weighted average over depth,  $z$ , with weighting  $e^{-kz}$   
113 to account for the exponential decay of strain with depth. For the extreme case of Eq. (10),  
114 this estimate would be identical except for a dependence on Poisson's ratio as  $1-\nu$  instead of  
115  $(1-2\nu)/(2-2\nu)$ . For reasonable values of  $\nu$ , the estimate of the correction term for  $K$  is  
116 therefore off by a factor of about 2 in this extreme case.

117 For  $T$ , we note that the elastic kinetic energy term scales as  $w_s^2/k$  whereas the standard kinetic  
 118 energy term scales as  $h^2/(Hk^2)$  so that  $w_s \ll h$  and  $kH \ll 1$  imply that the elastic kinetic  
 119 energy term is negligible compared to the  $T$  calculated in Eq. (3).

120 With the new estimate of  $K$  in Eq. (9) and the original estimate of  $T$  from Eq. (3), we  
 121 calculate

$$122 \quad \omega^2 = gHk^2 \left[ 1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k} \right], \quad (12)$$

123 and therefore

$$124 \quad c = \sqrt{gH} \cdot \sqrt{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k}} \approx \sqrt{gH} \left[ 1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{2\mu k} \right], \quad (13)$$

125 where the approximation is valid since  $w_s \ll h$ . From Eq. (13) we can immediately estimate  
 126 the decrease in tsunami speed expected from incorporating the elasticity of the solid Earth. To  
 127 make a preliminary estimate of the magnitude of this correction, we take  $k = 2\pi/1000$  km,  
 128  $\mu = 5 \cdot 10^{10}$  Pa,  $\nu = 0.3$ ,  $\rho = 1000$  kg/m<sup>3</sup>,  $g = 9.8$  m/s<sup>2</sup>, which yields an estimate of a -1.1%  
 129 phase velocity correction due to elasticity. We therefore see that this correction is significant  
 130 and, for example, is much larger than the correction of using the non-shallow-water equations  
 131 ( $c = \sqrt{g \tanh(kH)/k}$  rather than  $c = \sqrt{gH}$ ) for 1000 km wavelengths and typical ocean  
 132 depths ( $\approx 4$  km). The conclusion that this correction is significant differs from that of *Okal*  
 133 [1982] potentially because his work does not fully account for perturbations in the gravitational  
 134 potential of the solid Earth.

135 We note that our result can be shown to agree to first order with the expression of *Comer*  
 136 [1984] derived with a more classical approach (including non-shallow-water waves). In his



137 case, he ends up with a relation that can be simplified and approximated as

$$\begin{aligned}
 138 \quad c^2 &= \frac{g}{k} \cdot \frac{\tanh(kH) - (3\rho c^2/4\mu)}{1 - (3\rho c^2/4\mu) \tanh(kH)} \\
 139 \quad &\approx \frac{g}{k} \cdot [kH - (3\rho gH/4\mu)] = gH \left(1 - \frac{3\rho g}{4\mu k}\right), \tag{14}
 \end{aligned}$$

140 when assuming  $\nu = 1/4$  and, as before, that  $w_s \ll h$  and  $kH \ll 1$ . This then suggests the  
 141 non-shallow analog of Eq. (13) to be

$$\begin{aligned}
 142 \quad c &= \sqrt{\frac{g \tanh(kH)}{k}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k}}{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k} \tanh^2(kH)}}} \\
 143 \quad &\approx \sqrt{\frac{g \tanh(kH)}{k}} \cdot \sqrt{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k}}, \tag{15}
 \end{aligned}$$

144 where we still assume  $w_s \ll h$ , and the approximation is valid to first order in the small param-  
 145 eter  $kH$ .

#### 2.4. Tsunami Problem with Variable Water Density

146 Accounting for the increase of ocean water density with depth (due to ocean water compress-  
 147 ibility, which dominates over the effects of temperature and salinity on density) also yields a  
 148 systematic correction. In the standard formulation (e.g., Eq. (4)), it is observed that dependence  
 149 on the density of ocean water disappears since both  $K$  and  $M$  are proportional to  $\rho$ . However, if  
 150 density increases with depth, the derivations of Eqs. (1)-(3) must be revised. We begin our red-  
 151 erivation by assuming density increases approximately linearly with depth from the disturbed  
 152 surface, i.e.  $\rho(z') = \rho_0[1 + \rho_0 g(H + h - z')/\mathcal{K}]$  where  $\mathcal{K}$  is the bulk modulus,  $\rho_0$  is the surface  
 153 density, and  $z'$  is the height above the ocean floor. Assuming that the pressure is still given  
 154 by the static density field, the linearized momentum equation,  $\rho(z')\ddot{\mathbf{u}} = -\nabla p$ , can then be  
 155 simplified as

$$156 \quad \rho(z')\ddot{u} = -\rho(z')g\frac{\partial h}{\partial x}, \tag{16}$$

157 and we find that  $\dot{u}$  is still constant with depth. The general continuity equation,  $\dot{\rho} + \nabla \cdot (\rho \dot{\mathbf{u}}) = 0$   
 158 can be simplified as

$$159 \quad \frac{\rho_0 g}{\mathcal{K}} \dot{h} + \frac{\partial}{\partial x} [\rho(z') \dot{u}] + \frac{\partial}{\partial z} [\rho(z') \dot{w}] = 0. \quad (17)$$

160 Integrating  $z'$  from the bottom to the surface, and ignoring higher order terms then yields

$$161 \quad \rho_H \dot{h} + \rho_{avg} H \frac{\partial \dot{u}}{\partial x} \approx 0, \quad (18)$$

162 where  $\rho_H \approx \rho_0 [1 + \rho_0 g H / \mathcal{K}]$  is the density of water at the ocean bottom and  $\rho_{avg} \approx \rho_0 [1 +$   
 163  $\rho_0 g / (2\mathcal{K})]$  is the average density of water from the ocean bottom to the surface. Eq. (18) can  
 164 then be rewritten in the same form as Eq. (1) as

$$165 \quad H \dot{u} \approx - \frac{\rho_H}{\rho_{avg}} \int_0^x \dot{h}(s) ds. \quad (19)$$

166 The integrated continuity equation (mass conservation) also dictates that the average surface  
 167 height no longer remains constant and we must now distinguish between the reference water  
 168 depth  $H_0$  and the average water depth  $H(t) = H_0(1 + \alpha(t))$ . Mass (averaged over one wave-  
 169 length) is given by

$$170 \quad \mathcal{M} = \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \int_0^{H+h} \rho(z) dz dx$$

$$171 \quad \approx \mathcal{M}_0 + \rho_0 H_0 \left[ \alpha + \frac{\rho_0 g \xi^2}{4\mathcal{K} H_0} \right], \quad (20)$$

172 where  $\mathcal{M}_0$  is the mass in the reference state when  $\xi = 0$ . Mass conservation then implies  
 173  $\alpha = -\rho_0 g \xi^2 / (4\mathcal{K} H_0)$ .  $U$  can now be calculated as the sum of two contributions,  $U = U_g + U_{pV}$   
 174 where  $U_g$  is the gravitational potential energy and  $U_{pV}$  is the pressure-volume energy stored.  $U_g$

175 is given by

$$\begin{aligned}
 176 \quad U_g &= \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \int_0^{H+h} \rho(z') g z' dz' dx \\
 177 \quad &= \frac{1}{2} \rho_0 g H^2 \left[1 + \frac{\rho_0 g H}{3\mathcal{K}}\right] + \frac{1}{4} \rho_0 g \xi^2 \left[1 + \frac{\rho_0 g H}{\mathcal{K}}\right] \\
 178 \quad &\approx \frac{1}{2} \rho_0 g H_0^2 \left(1 + \frac{\rho_0 g H_0}{3\mathcal{K}}\right) + \frac{1}{4} \rho_0 g \xi^2 \\
 179 \quad &= U_{g0} + \frac{1}{4} \rho_0 g \xi^2, \tag{21}
 \end{aligned}$$

180 where  $U_{g0}$  is  $U_g$  in the reference state. Similarly,  $U_{pV}$  can be calculated as

$$\begin{aligned}
 181 \quad U_{pV} &= \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \int_0^{H+h} \int_0^h \frac{\rho_0 g \cdot p(h', H, z')}{\mathcal{K}} dh' dz' dx \\
 182 \quad &= \frac{k}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi/k} \int_0^{H+h} \rho_0 g \left(H + \frac{h}{2} - z'\right) \frac{\rho_0 g h}{\mathcal{K}} dz' dx \\
 183 \quad &= \frac{\rho_0 g}{4} \frac{\rho_0 g H}{\mathcal{K}} \xi^2. \tag{22}
 \end{aligned}$$

184 Adding the two contributions therefore gives

$$185 \quad U = U_g + U_{pV} - U_0 \approx \frac{\rho_H g \xi^2}{4}. \tag{23}$$

186 With Eq. (19) replacing Eq. (1) and Eq. (23) replacing Eq. (2), we can now identify new  
 187 expressions for  $K$  and  $M$  as  $K \approx \rho_H g / 2$  and  $M = \rho_H^2 H_0 / (2\rho_{avg})$  so that

$$188 \quad c \approx \sqrt{\frac{\rho_{avg}}{\rho_H}} \sqrt{gH} \approx \left(1 - \frac{\Delta\rho}{4\rho_{avg}}\right) \sqrt{gH}, \tag{24}$$

189 where  $\Delta\rho = \rho_0^2 g H_0 / \mathcal{K} \approx \rho_H - \rho_0$ . We note that this correction of Eq. (24) is asymptotically  
 190 similar to other density corrections proposed previously but is different in the numerical factor.  
 191 For example, where our Eq. (24) has  $1/4$ , *Okal* [1982] obtains a factor of  $1/6$  from solving a  
 192 normal mode problem, whereas the classical compressible tsunami solution has a factor of  $1/2$   
 193 [D. Wang, personal communication]. In both of these alternative derivations, it seems that den-  
 194 sity is assumed constant with depth but compressible, whereas our derivation assumes a more

195 realistic density profile increasing linearly with depth (in accordance with the compressibility).  
 196 We attribute the difference between our prediction and those others as due to this difference  
 197 in assumption, but a full analysis of why these discrepancies exist is beyond the scope of this  
 198 paper. We also note that our correction can also be obtained simply by substituting Eq. (16) into  
 199 Eq. (18) and solving the resulting wave equation. Therefore, the energy approach is seen to be  
 200 a completely compatible alternative to the classical approach (under the same assumptions).

201 For average ocean water (surface temperature of 17°C, salinity of 3.5%, depth of  $H =$   
 202 3800 m), surface density is  $\rho_0 = 1025.5 \text{ kg/m}^3$ , and standard high pressure corrections  
 203 [Millero *et al.*, 1980] predict close to the assumed linear increase of density with depth, with  
 204  $\rho_H = 1044.7 \text{ kg/m}^3$  and  $\rho_{avg} = 1036.1 \text{ kg/m}^3$ . We therefore expect  $c$  to be roughly 0.5% slower  
 205 than the standard shallow-water theory prediction due to water density increasing with depth.

206 Finally, we note that a similar correction could be made to Eq. (15). While we do not attempt  
 207 a full derivation of this, examination of the various terms involved in the previous derivation  
 208 suggests that the non-shallow water analogue to Eq. (24) is approximately correct when written  
 209 as

$$210 \quad c = \sqrt{\frac{\rho_{avg}}{\rho_H}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{g \tanh(kH)}{k}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k}}{1 - \frac{(1-\nu)\rho g}{\mu k} \tanh^2(kH)}}, \quad (25)$$

211 where  $\rho_{avg}$  and  $\rho_H$  now pertain to the portion of the water column that has significant motion.  
 212 For example, in the deep-water limit, both densities may be expected to be equal to the surface  
 213 density  $\rho_0$  and therefore not have an effect on  $c$ .

### 3. Application to the Earth

214 To more accurately compute the elastic correction of Eq. (13), we perform the layered elastic  
 215 halfspace approximation suggested in Section 2.3. For our layered elastic model, we take PREM

216 [*Dziewonski and Anderson, 1981*] from the ocean bottom (at 3 km depth) to the core-mantle  
 217 boundary (at 2891 km depth). As shown in Fig. 2 (dashed blue curve), the elastic correction  
 218 predicts a discrepancy of about 0.3% from standard shallow-water predictions at a wavelength  
 219 of 200 km, and a discrepancy of close to 1.0% at 1000 km. Once standard non-shallow water  
 220 effects are included (with standard dispersion  $\omega^2 = gk \tanh kH$ , the solid blue curve in Fig. 2),  
 221 the simple correction is similar to the preliminary results computed by *Watada et al.* [2011].

222 Including the additional (non-dispersive) ocean water density correction of Eq. (25) (thick  
 223 solid green curve in Fig. 2), we find that our predicted correction is now significantly larger.  
 224 In particular, the correction at shorter wavelengths (200 km) is about a factor of 2 larger (going  
 225 from 0.5% to 1.0%), and the correction at longer wavelengths (1000 km) goes from about  
 226 1.0% to 1.5%. This predicted discrepancy reproduces reasonably well both the dominant-period  
 227 discrepancies observed by a number of authors [e.g., *Simons et al.*, 2011; *Yamazaki et al.*, 2012;  
 228 *Grilli et al.*, 2012] as well as the preliminary measurements of *Watada et al.* [2011], *Kusumoto*  
 229 *et al.* [2011] and *Kusumoto et al.* [2012].

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

230 In this work, we find that an energy argument can be used to derive the shallow water tsunami  
 231 wavespeed with the inclusion of elastic Earth deformation as well as non-uniform water density.  
 232 Both effects are shown to result in significant deviations from the standard shallow water pre-  
 233 diction. In particular, the density effect slows the tsunami by about 0.5% and the elastic effect  
 234 slows the tsunami by 0.2-1.0% as wavelength increases from 200 to 1000 km. Together, the two  
 235 effects are able to explain much of the discrepancy for the March 11, 2011 Tohoku earthquake  
 236 tsunami observed across the Pacific Ocean [*Simons et al.*, 2011; *Watada et al.*, 2011; *Yamazaki*

237 *et al.*, 2012; *Grilli et al.*, 2012]. Since the corrections in Eq. (25) that we suggest are straight-  
238 forward to calculate (for example, much easier than performing the lengthy computations that  
239 *Watada et al.* [2011] undertakes), we suggest that the correction can eventually be included in  
240 standard tsunami models.

241 We would like to stress, however, that we have only attempted to understand two corrections  
242 to the standard shallow water theory that we have calculated to be important. There remain at  
243 least three major issues. First, there are other potentially important corrections. For example,  
244 we have not attempted to include the effect of radiation of elastic energy (and hence dissipation  
245 of tsunami energy), classical dispersion as in *DeDontney and Rice* [2011], interactions with a  
246 thin viscous muddy layer as in *Gade* [1958] or other types of bottom friction, or Coriolis ef-  
247 fects, and we do not attempt to address the potential bias resulting from using coarsely sampled  
248 bathymetry. Some of these effects, like that of elastic radiation, may be relatively straightfor-  
249 ward to include within the framework we have constructed, but we make no attempt here to do  
250 so, and some of these effects may be important. Secondly, we have only provided a physical  
251 explanation of the corrections discussed and have not attempted to put the equations derived  
252 into a form that is commonly used by tsunami modelers. Additional work will be necessary to  
253 provide this information. A third issue is that comparisons of the various ‘data’ [e.g., *Simons*  
254 *et al.*, 2011; *Watada et al.*, 2011; *Kusumoto et al.*, 2011; *Yamazaki et al.*, 2012; *Grilli et al.*,  
255 2012; *Kusumoto et al.*, 2012] yield comparable but not completely identical results, and we do  
256 not claim that any of them are entirely accurate. Nonetheless, we believe our theoretical results  
257 to be applicable and useful, independent of the precise observations. Our suggested corrections  
258 represent an improved physical model and, moreover, predict corrections that seem to account

259 for a majority of the current discrepancies between actual tsunami arrival times and the standard  
 260 tsunami model predictions.

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**Figure 1.** Schematic depicting tsunami model parameters. The blue curve denotes the sea surface and the brown curve denotes the ocean bottom. The left side is for the standard rigid bottom case of Section 2.2 whereas the right side is for the extensions as discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.4. In both cases,  $h(x) = \xi \cos(kx)$ . The density profile  $\rho(z)$  is assumed to be primarily a function of depth from the sea surface, as drawn.

**Figure 2.** Deviation from the standard shallow water speed. Solid thin black curve is the standard non-shallow water correction ( $\omega^2 = gk \tanh kH$ ). Dashed blue curve is the prediction based only on including the elastic deformation correction of Eq. (13) and the solid blue curve is using Eq. (15) (i.e. Eq. (13) corrected by the black curve). Solid thick green curve is the prediction using both the ocean density correction and the elastic correction of Eq. (25), and the dashed thick green curve is using the shallow-water approximation to Eq. (25). Although the observed discrepancies are not very well documented, the shaded gray region denotes the approximate range of measured tsunami travel-time discrepancies from *Simons et al.* [2011], *Kusumoto et al.* [2011], *Watada et al.* [2011], *Yamazaki et al.* [2012], *Grilli et al.* [2012], and *Kusumoto et al.* [2012].



