



Effects of soil rewetting and thawing on soil gas fluxes: a review of current literature and suggestions for future research

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Received: 31 August 2011 – Published in Biogeosciences Discuss.: 4 October 2011

Revised: 30 May 2012 – Accepted: 3 June 2012 – Published: 9 July 2012

Abstract. The rewetting of dry soils and the thawing of frozen soils are short-term, transitional phenomena in terms of hydrology and the thermodynamics of soil systems. The impact of these short-term phenomena on larger scale ecosystem fluxes is increasingly recognized, and a growing number of studies show that these events affect fluxes of soil gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), ammonia (NH₃) and nitric oxide (NO). Global climate models predict that future climatic change is likely to alter the frequency and intensity of drying-rewetting events and thawing of frozen soils. These future scenarios highlight the importance of understanding how rewetting and thawing will influence dynamics of these soil gases. This study summarizes findings using a new database containing 338 studies conducted from 1956 to 2011, and highlights open research questions. The database revealed conflicting results following rewetting and thawing in various terrestrial ecosystems and among soil gases, ranging from large increases in fluxes to non-significant changes. Studies reporting lower gas fluxes before rewetting tended to find higher post-rewetting fluxes for CO₂, N₂O and NO; in addition, increases in N₂O flux following thawing were greater in warmer climate regions. We discuss possible mechanisms and controls that regulate flux responses, and recommend that a high temporal resolution of flux measurements is critical to capture rapid changes in gas fluxes after these soil perturbations. Finally, we propose that future studies should investigate the interactions

between biological (i.e., microbial community and gas production) and physical (i.e., porosity, diffusivity, dissolution) changes in soil gas fluxes, apply techniques to capture rapid changes (i.e., automated measurements), and explore synergistic experimental and modelling approaches.

1 Introduction

The rewetting of dry soils and the thawing of frozen soils represent abrupt step changes in soil biophysical conditions, with critical implications for biogeochemical cycling. From an organismal perspective, soil rewetting and thawing have similar effects because both processes increase the availability of soil water, rehydrate cells, increase microbial metabolism, and mobilize nutrients. Both processes are also relatively transient, non-stationary, and the duration of individual rewetting and thawing events varies as a result of the effects of local climatic conditions, topography, drainage, vegetation type, and soil thermal properties (Balsler and Firestone, 2005; Vargas et al., 2010b). The sudden flush of water and nutrients that occurs after rewetting and thawing induces changes in plant and microbial activity, with organisms shifting rapidly from dormant or senescent states to active ones (Kieft et al., 1987; Schimel and Clein, 1996; Kemmitt et al., 2008).

It is important to understand the change in magnitude of fluxes from soil gases (i.e., CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃) following rewetting and thawing events. These fluxes are either by-products, intermediates, or end-products of soil-related microbial processes involved in C and N dynamics in soils. These gases also play crucial roles in atmospheric chemistry, with the notable characteristic that CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O are greenhouse gases (GHG). In addition, soil NH₃ emissions are of considerable interest since they constitute a significant loss of N in agricultural soils (Nelson, 1982; Francis et al., 2008), causing soil acidification (Van der Eerden et al., 1998; Rennenberg and Gessler, 1999), eutrophication through atmospheric deposition (Bobbink et al., 1992), and are an indirect source of N₂O (Martikainen, 1985). Nitric oxide is indirectly involved in global warming and contributes to the net production of radiatively active tropospheric ozone and the formation of acid rain (Williams et al., 1992). Nitric oxide is also important in controlling the oxidizing capacity of the troposphere, thereby affecting the fate of carbon monoxide, CH₄ and nonmethane hydrocarbons (Liu et al., 1987).

Future climatic change is likely to alter the frequency and intensity of drying-rewetting events (Meehl et al., 2006; Sheffield and Wood, 2008; Sinha and Cherkauer, 2010). Furthermore, the frequency and intensity of soil frost (i.e., freeze-thaw cycles and annual soil freezing days) are also likely to change since warming could lead to a reduction in the thickness of the insulating snowpack and thus colder winter soil temperatures (Henry, 2008; Gu et al., 2008; Blankinship and Hart, 2012). It is thus important to understand how soil rewetting and thawing influence soil GHG fluxes, because these events could influence substantially annual gas budgets, and increases or decreases in these fluxes may contribute to either positive or negative feedbacks to climate change.

While abrupt increases in soil CO₂, N₂O, NH₃ and NO fluxes following rewetting are commonly observed in various agricultural lands and natural lands (Birch, 1958; Priemé and Christensen, 2001; Saetre and Stark, 2005), rewetting can either increase (Moore et al., 1998; Knorr et al., 2008) or inhibit (Kessavalou et al., 1998; Teh et al., 2005) CH₄ oxidation. Similarly, increases in CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O fluxes following soil thawing have been shown to affect total annual gas budgets (Röver et al., 1998; Papen and Butterbach-Bahl, 1999). Despite a growing number of studies, there are still many uncertainties in our understanding of the mechanisms and impacts of changing rainfall patterns and freeze-thaw cycles on annual gas budgets. These uncertainties are exacerbated by the coarse temporal resolution of most flux measurements that do not capture the complete pulse dynamics (Groffman et al., 2006; Muhr et al., 2009). Additional uncertainties arise from unrealistic experiments of dry-wet and freeze-thaw events (as discussed in Henry, 2007; Jentsch et al., 2007). These experiments simulate events that are out of the expected range of soil temperature and soil moisture

(i.e., > 95 % CI) in current and past climate conditions, so the results are difficult to apply under current climate conditions.

The growing number of studies on the individual effects of rewetting and thawing specifically on CO₂ and N₂O fluxes have been the focus of several reviews (Jarvis et al., 2007; Henry, 2007; Matzner and Borken, 2008; Borken and Matzner, 2009; Groffman et al., 2009; Blankinship and Hart, 2012). This review is novel in that it takes a comprehensive approach to dealing with the effects of both rewetting and thawing on multiple soil gas fluxes (i.e., CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃), and provides a new open-access database of published studies conducted between 1956 and 2011 ($n = 338$). Our objectives were to: (1) summarize the effects of rewetting and thawing on multiple soil gas fluxes (i.e., CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃) and highlight common patterns across studies; (2) discuss the potential underlying mechanisms and drivers of variation of soil gas fluxes following rewetting and thawing; and (3) identify knowledge gaps and highlight future research questions.

2 Methodology

2.1 Data collection

Data on changes in gas fluxes of CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃ following rewetting and thawing were acquired by searching existing refereed literature published between 1950 and 2011 using Web of Science and Google Scholar with search terms such as “rewetting”, “thawing”, “peak flux”, “peak emission” and name of gases. Studies with field observations of rewetting of dry soils include events caused by natural rainfall, simulated rainfall in natural ecosystems, and irrigation in agricultural lands. Similarly, studies of thawing of frozen soils include field observations of natural thawing, simulated freezing-thawing events (i.e., thawing of simulated frozen soil by snow removal, simulated freezing-thawing cycles in the laboratory), and thawing of seasonal ice in temperate and high latitude regions. We did not include the long-term effects of changing active layer depths caused by permafrost thaw in this review, as changes in gas fluxes in response to permafrost thaw are affected by both changing soil and plant successional processes (Turetsky et al., 2002; Christensen et al., 2004; Walter et al., 2006; Anisimov, 2007; Turetsky et al., 2007). We define response as the behavior or reaction dynamics of the different soil gas fluxes that result from rewetting or thawing of soils. The responses may vary in intensity, magnitude and/or duration, depending on the gas analyzed.

The resulting database comprised 222 field and laboratory observations (CO₂ $n = 54$, CH₄ $n = 15$, N₂O $n = 58$, NO $n = 87$ and NH₃ $n = 8$) focused on rewetting of dry soils, and 116 field and laboratory observations (CO₂ $n = 23$, CH₄ $n = 10$, N₂O $n = 78$, NO $n = 5$) focused on thawing of

frozen soils. The version of this database used for this study (v.1.0) has been archived at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory Distributed Active Archive Center (http://daac.ornl.gov/SOILS/guides/global_rtsg_flux_v1.html); A Global Database of Gas Fluxes from Soils after Rewetting or Thawing, Version 1.0).

2.2 Determining gas flux change rates and compiled dataset analysis

For studies that reported temporal changes in gas flux rates pre- and post rewetting or thawing events in a single treatment (Fig. 1a), we calculated the change in gas flux rates (%) using the flux values observed before the event (i.e., rewetting or thawing) along with peak flux values that occurred post-event:

$$\text{Flux change} = \frac{(\text{Peak flux}_{\text{post-event}}) - (\text{Flux}_{\text{pre-event}})}{(\text{Flux}_{\text{pre-event}})} \times 100 \% \quad (1)$$

where Flux change (%) is the relative effect of the event on gas flux, Peak flux_{post-event} is the rate of peak gas flux following the event, and Flux_{pre-event} is the rate of gas flux before the event (i.e., rewetting or thawing).

For studies that compared gas fluxes between simulated (representing either rewetting or thawing treatments) and control treatments (Fig. 1b), we calculated changes in gas fluxes exactly as in Eq. (1), but using Peak flux_{Exp} (the rate of peak gas flux following the treatment; substituted for Flux_{post-event}) and Flux_{Control} (the rate of gas flux observed at the control at the time peak gas flux; substituted for Peak flux_{pre-event}).

Peak flux period was determined by identifying duration of increased flux of soil gases following soil rewetting and thawing in field (Fig. 1a) and laboratory experiments (Fig. 1b). The dataset prepared for this manuscript ($n = 338$ studies) is dominated by experiments using discrete measurements that miss the highly detailed patterns of soil gas fluxes following rewetting or thawing as shown in Fig. 2. Thus, we used Eq. (1) as a proxy to represent a simplified response based on discrete measurements of soil gas fluxes. It is important to recognize that discrete measurements introduce uncertainty in calculating flux changes as it is difficult to determine the peak flux period, as seen in Fig. 2. If gas fluxes were presented only in a figure without numeric values reported in the original text or tables, we calculated the corresponding values from the figure using the software Acrobat[®] 8 Professional ver. 8.2 (Adobe Systems, Inc. San Jose, CA, USA).

The relationship between rate change of soil gas fluxes following rewetting and thawing and Flux_{pre-event} and mean annual temperature was determined by fitting linear models, with logarithmic transformations when necessary for heteroscedasticity. All analyses were performed using R 2.14.1. (R Development Core Team, 2011).

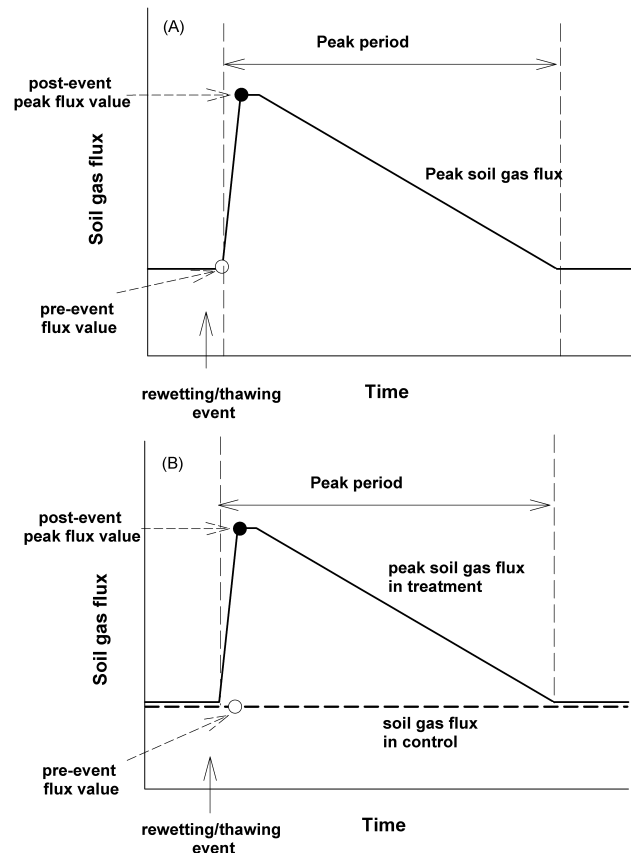


Fig. 1. Simplified hypothetical figures representing peak soil gas flux in rewetting of dry soils and thawing of frozen soils and peak flux period. Peak gas flux occurred in natural rewetting or thawing event (solid line) and pre-event flux value (white dot) and post-event peak flux value (black dot) used to determine flux change rate (A); peak gas flux occurred in rewetting or thawing treatment (solid line) and gas flux in control (dot line) and pre-event flux value (white dot, the flux value in control when post-event peak flux value is read) and post-event flux value (black dot) used to determine flux change rate (B). The figure is a simplification of the response and does not reflect the full dynamics of a pulse response as shown in Fig. 2.

3 A review of the effect of rewetting and thawing on soil gas fluxes

For each soil gas we discuss below: (1) how rewetting and thawing events influence gas fluxes in various ecosystems and experimental designs; and (2) the likely mechanisms and environmental controls underlying the observed patterns. We define response as the behaviour or change in soil gas fluxes (see Fig. 1, Eq. 1) that results from rewetting or thawing of soils.

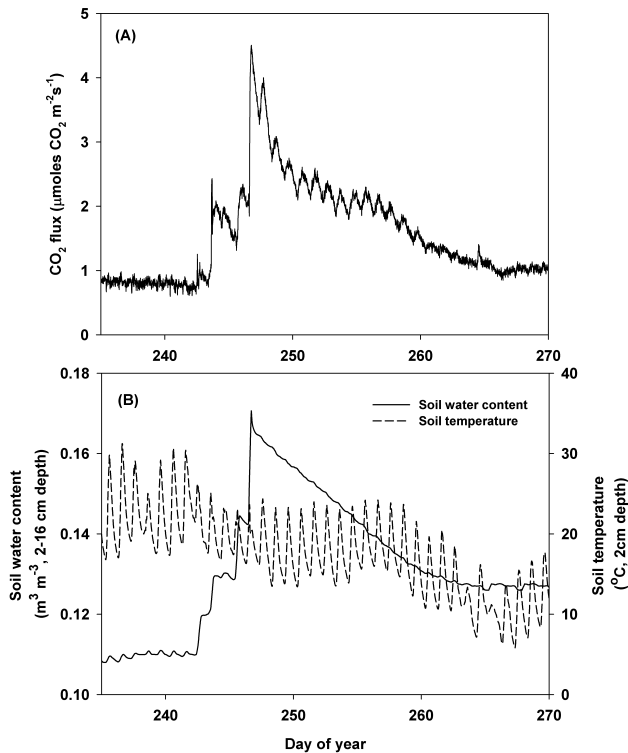


Fig. 2. High temporal resolution (hourly data) of soil CO₂ flux dynamics before and after a rewetting event (A); and soil water content (2–16 cm depth) and soil temperature (2 cm depth) dynamics during the same dates of the soil CO₂ flux measurements (B). Measurements were done during the year 2008 at the San Jacinto Mountains James Reserve, CA, USA (Vargas et al., 2010b).

3.1 Patterns of soil gas flux response to rewetting and thawing

3.1.1 Carbon dioxide

Soil surface CO₂ flux provides an integrated result of biological CO₂ production throughout the soil column, changes in soil CO₂ diffusivity in the soil profile, and in some areas geological processes (Raich and Schlesinger, 1992; Schlesinger and Andrews, 2000). Carbon dioxide is the dominant loss pathway in most terrestrial ecosystems, as well as the most important GHG in the atmosphere. Our database contains 77 studies that measured CO₂ and are equivalent to ~23% of all studies. This shows that CO₂ is the soil gas that has received the third most attention for studying the effects of rewetting and thawing of soils.

Increases in CO₂ flux following rewetting of dry soils have been reported in multiple terrestrial ecosystems and various land-use types, including cropland (Kessavalou et al., 1998), grazing pasture (Xu and Baldocchi, 2004), forest (Kim et al., 2010b), grassland (Joos et al., 2010), savannas (Castaldi et al., 2010), and desert (Sponseller and Fisher, 2008). Incubation experiments have yielded similar patterns, showing

CO₂ flux increases after rewetting in soils from cropland (Beare et al., 2009), grazing pasture (Wu et al., 2010b), forest (Fierer and Schimel, 2003), grassland (Xiang et al., 2008), peatland (Goldammer and Blodau, 2008) and desert (Sponseller and Fisher, 2008) ecosystems. For example, in an upper Sonoran Desert ecosystem, CO₂ flux increased up to 30-fold immediately following experimental rewetting, and within 48 h returned to the rate of gas flux before the event (Sponseller, 2007). In soil moisture manipulations in a Norway spruce plantation, drought and rewetting treatments increased the annual CO₂ flux by 51% compared with a control plot (Borken et al., 1999). Lee et al. (2004) estimated that the increase in CO₂ flux in a single intensive storm amounted to a loss of 0.18 t C ha⁻¹ to the atmosphere, or 5–10% of the annual net ecosystem production in a mid-latitude forest. These studies have reported increased CO₂ flux after rewetting in short-term (ca. 6–24 h) (Table 1, Fig. 3), and relative CO₂ flux increases ranging from 40% to > 9000% (Table 1, Fig. 4). The relative CO₂ flux increase following rewetting in desert (mean 8425%) is higher than those of cropland, forest, grassland, savanna and wetland (100–4400%) (Table 2). Together, these studies support the hypothesis that rewetting a variety of soil types can have substantial effects on the C balance of terrestrial ecosystems (Borken et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2004; Xu et al., 2004).

Some studies showed no response or small increased CO₂ fluxes following rewetting or thawing events and did not substantially affect annual flux rates (Coxson and Parkinson, 1987; Schimel and Clein, 1996; Nielsen et al., 2001; Muhr and Borken, 2009; Muhr et al., 2010). Other studies showed reduced CO₂ fluxes during drying periods, but the abruptly increased fluxes following rewetting did not compensate for the reduced rates during the dry period at the seasonal scale (Borken and Matzner, 2009; Joos et al., 2010). In addition, soil CO₂ flux could be suppressed during or after rainfall as previously reported: (1) large (10-fold) decreases during light rainfall in arable soils (Rochette et al., 1991), and (2) sharp soil CO₂ flux decreases in no-tillage agricultural fields (Ball et al., 1999).

Increased CO₂ flux after thawing has been observed in various terrestrial ecosystems, including forest (Wu et al., 2010a), alpine tundra (Brooks et al., 1997), and arctic heath (Elberling and Brandt, 2003), and in incubation experiments with soils from cropland (Kurganova et al., 2007), grassland (Wu et al., 2010b), forest (Goldberg et al., 2008), bog (Panikov and Dedysh, 2000), taiga and tundra (Schimel and Clein, 1996), and Antarctica (Zhu et al., 2009). Reported CO₂ flux increases after thawing can range up to 5000% (Table 1, Fig. 4). The relative CO₂ flux increase following thawing in tundra (5530%) is higher than those of cropland, forest, grassland other ecosystems (150–1630%; Table 2). Such increases in CO₂ flux after seasonal thawing were important to the annual budget of CO₂ flux in arable soils (Priemé and Christensen, 2001; Kurganova et al., 2007), but did not affect the annual budget in some natural sites (Coxson and

Table 1. Summary of effects of soil rewetting and thawing on soil CO₂ and CH₄ fluxes. Number of field observations (F) and number of laboratory experiments (L) used for the analysis: rewetting of dry soils (CO₂ *n* = 54, CH₄ *n* = 15) and thawing of frozen soils (CO₂ *n* = 23, CH₄ *n* = 10).

Gas type	Event	Observed ecosystems	Peak periods (d) ^{a,b}	Change rate (%) ^{a,c}	Mechanism	Driver
CO ₂	Rewetting	Croplands, forests, grasslands, savannas, deserts.	F: 3 (0.25–30), L: 4 (0.7–5.5)	F: 140 (42–10 880), L: 500 (112–3000)	1. Microbial metabolism can be enhanced by the availability of accumulated substrate during soil drying periods. 2. Rewetting could disrupt soil aggregates, exposing physically protected organic matter and increase the accessibility of substrate that can be rapidly mineralized. 3. Root exudates from reviving plants following rewetting could significantly affect soil surface flux. 4. Physical mechanisms involving infiltration, reduced diffusivity and gas displacement in the soil can influence gas flux.	Size of soil organic pool, the quality of organic matter, the properties of soil biota, moisture state conditions before rewetting, successive cycles, soil temperature, agricultural management practice, plant photosynthesis rates following rewetting.
	Thawing	Croplands, forests, grasslands, alpine tundra, arctic heath.	L: 1.5 (1.5–7)	F: 203 (158–5227), L: 500 (112–3900)	1. Microbial metabolism can be enhanced by the availability of accumulated substrate during soil freezing periods. 2. Thawing could disrupt soil aggregates, exposing physically protected organic matter and increase the accessibility of substrate that can be rapidly mineralized.	Substance availability, frost temperatures, freeze-thaw event frequency.
CH ₄	Rewetting	Croplands, peatland, tropical forest.	F: 2 (2–3), L: 2 (2–32)	F: 76 (60–667), L: –453 (–709–88.5)	1. Wetting increases the availability of water-soluble carbon substrates and soil methanotrophs are able to use this carbon. 2. Water-soluble carbon substrates reduce O ₂ concentrations and support soil methanogens, which then supply CH ₄ to methanotrophs. 3. Drought typically suppresses CH ₄ production, while rewetting increases it. Methanogenic populations require some time to re-establish after rewetting. 4. Drying and rewetting of soils can increase SO ₄ pools through remineralization of organic sulfate and/or reoxidation of iron sulfides. This can stimulate sulfate reduction and effectively suppress methanogenesis. 5. Rewetting inhibits methanotrophic activity in more poorly drained soils.	Not yet revealed.
	Thawing	Peatlands, forest, mineral wetlands.	L: 7	F: 433 (33–765), L: 1100	1. Freezing increases substrate availability and limits O ₂ transport into soil, both of which would promote methanogenesis and CH ₄ is stored in deeper soil layers. 2. During thawing periods, the diffusion barriers disappear, and trapped CH ₄ is released to the atmosphere. 3. Thawing can create saturated surface soils in the active layer, which can favour CH ₄ production and suppress methanotrophy. 4. Low temperatures reduced microbial activity of some aerobic microbes, and the resulting presence of more O ₂ in soil increased methanotrophy and reduced methanogenesis.	Not yet revealed.

^a Mean (min.–max.); ^b refer to Fig. 1, results from compiled dataset analysis; ^c refer to Sect. 2.2, results from compiled dataset analysis.

Table 2. Change rate (%) of soil gas flux following rewetting and thawing events observed in various ecosystems (results from compiled dataset analysis). F = field observation; L = laboratory experiment.

Rewetting event					
Ecosystem type	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	NO	NH ₃
Cropland	F: 100 ± 19 (9)*, L: 1042 ± 503 (4)	F: 67 ± 3 (6)	F: 487 ± 87 (3), L: 68 600 ± 21 169 (7)	F: 1008 ± 474 (5), L: 650 ± 250 (2)	–
Desert	F: 8425 ± 4625 (2)	–	–	F: 1187 ± 572 (4), L: 2100 ± 1200 (2)	F: 561 ± 182 (4), L: 575 ± 85 (4)
Forest	F: 102 ± 26 (9), L: 800 ± 530 (5)	L: –538 ± 98 (3)	F: 9787 ± 6528 (13), L: 85 210 ± 83 675 (5)	F: 1725 ± 731 (17), L: 1380 ± 1002 (9)	–
Grassland	F: 4440 ± 2510 (4), L: 675 ± 217 (5)	–	F: 945 ± 411 (5), L: 34 973 ± 20 571 (6)	F: 47 823 ± 44 885 (18), L: 2900 ± 1806 (7)	–
Rice paddy	–	–	F: 450 ± 126 (3)	–	–
Sand dune	–	–	–	L: 6900 (1)	–
Savanna	F: 750 ± 413 (5)	–	F: 1609 ± 374 (7)	F: 4920 ± 1835 (18)	–
Wetland	L: 130 ± 18 (2)	F: 471 ± 112 (3)	F: 1250 (1), L: 8457 ± 7157 (2)	L: 1700 (1)	–
Thawing event					
Ecosystem type	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	NO	NH ₃
Arctic heath	F: 150 (1)	–	–	–	–
Cropland	L: 918 ± 418 (3)	–	F: 1755 ± 416 (15), L: 62 250 ± 22 683 (4)	–	–
Forest	F: 220 ± 42 (3), L: 525 ± 266 (4)	–	F: 4176 ± 1771 (9), L: 619 ± 173 (5)	–	–
Grassland	L: 752 ± 262 (4)	F: 33 (1)	F: 836 ± 33 (3), L: 35 052 ± 20 585 (6)	L: 500 (2)	–
Sand dune	L: 900 (1)	–	L: 100 (1)	L: 40 (1)	–
Tundra	F: 5227 (1)	F: 433 ± 67 (2)	F: 748 (1)	–	–
Wetland	L: 1631 ± 1519 (2)	F: 538 ± 227 (3), L: 1100 (1)	L: 3271 ± 2581 (3)	L: 200 (1)	–

* Mean ± standard error (number of samples); “–” no data.

Parkinson, 1987; Schimel and Clein, 1996; Neilsen et al., 2001). However, we caution that most of these studies lack the high temporal sampling resolution necessary to capture the full dynamic of the pulse (Groffman et al., 2006; Muhr et al., 2009, Vargas et al., 2011), as shown in Fig. 2.

3.1.2 Methane

Net CH₄ flux is the result of the balance between methanogenesis (microbial production under anaerobic conditions) and methanotrophy (microbial consumption) (Dutaur and Verchot, 2007). Methanogenesis occurs via the anaerobic degradation of organic matter by methanogenic archaea within the archaeal phylum *Euryarchaeota* (Thauer, 1998). Methanotrophy occurs by methanotrophs metabolizing CH₄ as their source of carbon and energy (Hanson and Hanson, 1996). In anoxic soils, emergent vegetation also influences CH₄ flux to the atmosphere, as plants enable oxygen transport to the rhizosphere through aerenchymateous tissue and through the production of labile substrates via root exudation

(Joabsson et al., 1999). Methane also can be stored in soils and consequently released to the atmosphere during changes in pressure such as with freezing (Mastepanov et al., 2008). Plant mediated release likely reduces CH₄ storage in soils and thus could reduce episodic releases of CH₄ (Chanton, 2005; Tagesson et al., 2012), though other studies have found no relationship between vascular plant abundance and ebullition (Coulthard et al., 2009; Green and Baird, 2012). Our database contains 25 studies that measured CH₄ and are equivalent to ~ 7% of all studies. This shows that CH₄ is one of the soil gases that have received the least attention for studying the effects of rewetting and thawing of soils.

The reported effects of rewetting and thawing on CH₄ fluxes were variable within our database. Rewetting reduced CH₄ consumption or increased CH₄ production in arable land (Syamsul Arif et al., 1996; Kessavalou et al., 1998; Hergoualc’h et al., 2008), peatlands (Kettunen et al., 1996; Blodau and Moore, 2003; Dinsmore et al., 2009), and tropical forests (Silver et al., 1999). In a wheat-fallow

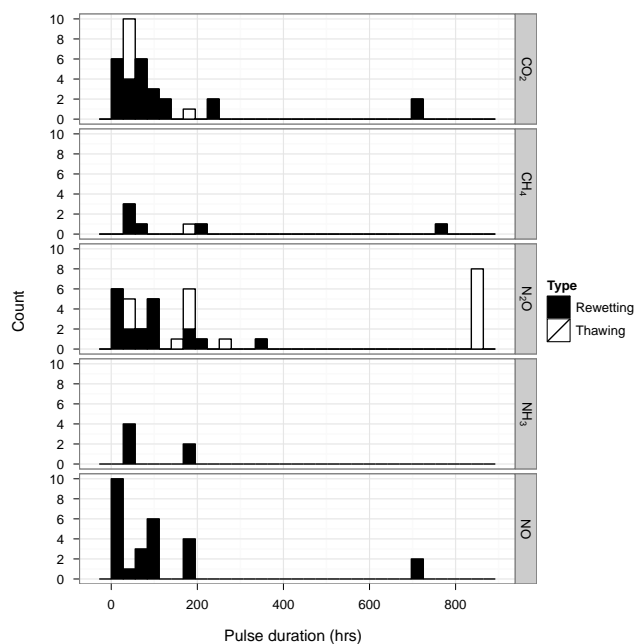


Fig. 3. Histograms of the duration of increased flux of soil gas CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃ following soil rewetting and thawing in field and laboratory experiments.

cropping system, CH₄ consumption declined by about 60 % for 3–14 d after rewetting (Kessavalou et al., 1998). In peatland, a pulse of CH₄ was observed after water table draw-down (Moore and Knowles, 1990; Shurpali et al., 1993), and substantial pulses of CH₄ fluxes were produced with both drainage (700 μg m⁻² h⁻¹ above the pre-change mean) and rewetting (over 160 μg m⁻² h⁻¹ above the value of prior to rewetting) within 1–2 days in a mesocosm study (Dinsmore et al., 2009). In contrast, other studies have reported that rewetting increased CH₄ consumption, or reduced CH₄ production, both in the field (Davidson et al., 2004, 2008; Borken et al., 2006; Fiedler et al., 2008) and laboratory (Czepiel et al., 1995; West and Schmidt, 1998; Estop-Aragonés and Blodau, 2012). In incubation experiments with alpine soil, CH₄ oxidation increased significantly from 11 pmol CH₄ (g dry weight)⁻¹ h⁻¹ to –67.0––29.5 pmol CH₄ (g dry weight)⁻¹ h⁻¹ 9 days after rewetting (West and Schmidt, 1998). Enhanced CH₄ oxidation was promoted after rewetting for days to weeks in peatland (Öquist and Sundh, 1998; Kettunen et al., 1999; Goldammer and Blodau, 2008) and rice field (Ratering and Conrad, 1998). However, in an in situ water table drawdown experiment, CH₄ production declined in hummocks but stayed constant in hollows relative to control plots, suggesting a strong role of microtopography in the effects of rewetting on CH₄ fluxes (Strack and Waddington, 2007).

Seasonal thawing of soils increased CH₄ flux in a peatland (Tokida et al., 2007), forest (Kim and Tanaka, 2003), and wetlands (Friborg et al., 1997; Song et al., 2006; Ding

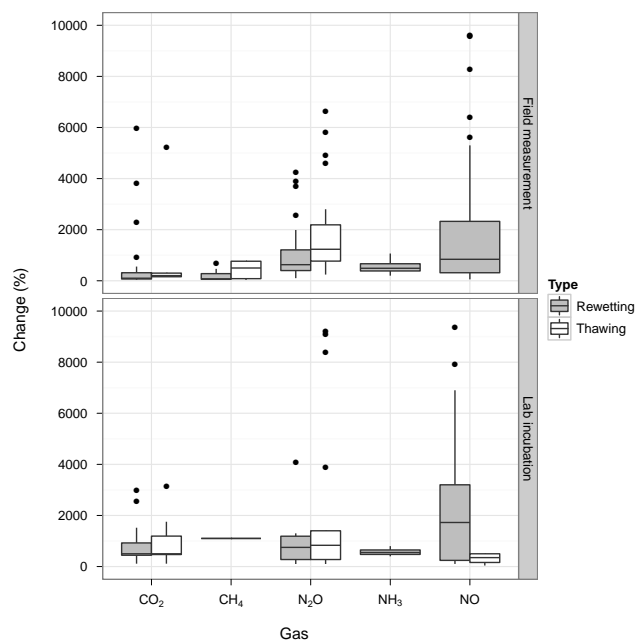


Fig. 4. Change rate (%) of soil gas CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃ fluxes following soil rewetting and thawing in field and laboratory experiments. Top and bottom of box are 25th and 75th percentiles; whiskers extend to 1.5 × interquartile range.

and Cai, 2007; Yu et al., 2007). In a subarctic peatland, CH₄ flux increased from 2.6 mg m⁻² d⁻¹ to 22.5 mg m⁻² d⁻¹ during thawing, with the latter rate equivalent to approximately 25 % of the mid-summer flux (Friborg et al., 1997). A few studies have also shown enhanced CH₄ consumption during seasonal thawing periods (Ding and Cai, 2007; Wu et al., 2010b). In addition to affecting rates of CH₄ production and oxidation, seasonal soil thaw also may affect CH₄ transport mechanisms (Friborg et al., 1997; Kim and Tanaka, 2003; Tokida et al., 2007). For example, surface seasonal thawing in a bog appeared to trigger ebullition events, with flux up to 25.3 mg CH₄ m⁻² h⁻¹ (Tokida et al., 2007). In Alaskan boreal forest soils damaged by fire, CH₄ flux increased 7–142 % during seasonal thawing (Kim and Tanaka, 2003). Longer-term increases in an active layer depth with permafrost thaw also tend to increase CH₄ flux in high latitude wetlands and lakes (Turetsky et al., 2002; Christensen et al., 2004; Walter et al., 2006; Anisimov, 2007), although these processes are not the focus of this review. In summary, studies report a large uncertainty in CH₄ responses after rewetting and thawing, but there are much smaller responses in magnitude and fewer observations compared with other gases (Table 1, Fig. 3).

3.1.3 Nitrous oxide

Three main processes produce N₂O in soils: (1) nitrification, the stepwise oxidation of NH₃ to nitrite (NO₂⁻) and to nitrate

(NO_3^-) (Kowalchuk and Stephen, 2001); (2) denitrification, the stepwise reduction of NO_3^- to NO_2^- , NO , N_2O and ultimately N_2 , where facultative anaerobic bacteria use NO_3^- as an electron acceptor in the respiration of organic material under low oxygen (O_2) conditions (Knowles, 1982); and (3) nitrifier denitrification, which is carried out by autotrophic NH_3 -oxidizing bacteria and the pathway whereby NH_3 is oxidized to nitrite NO_2^- , followed by the reduction of NO_2^- to nitric oxide NO , N_2O and molecular nitrogen (N_2) (Wrage et al., 2001). Our database contains 165 studies that measured N_2O and are equivalent to $\sim 40\%$ of all studies. This shows that N_2O is the soil gas that has received the most attention for studying the effects of rewetting and thawing of soils.

Field studies have observed increased soil N_2O flux following wetting in cropland (Barton et al., 2008), grazed pasture (Kim et al., 2010a), tropical forest (Butterbach-Bahl et al., 2004), grassland (Hao et al., 1988), savannah (Martin et al., 2003), and fen (Goldberg et al., 2010a). Laboratory incubation experiments with cropland (Beare et al., 2009), forest (Dick et al., 2001), grassland (Yao et al., 2010), and peatland soils (Dinsmore et al., 2009) have yielded similar results of increased N_2O flux after rewetting. In tropical soils in Costa Rica, N_2O flux pulses began within 30 min, peaking no later than 8 h after rewetting, and $25 \text{ g N}_2\text{O-N ha}^{-1}$ was emitted for three simulated rain events over a 22-day period (control emitted $14 \text{ g N}_2\text{O-N ha}^{-1}$), and one episodic N_2O production event driven by one moderate rain accounted for 15–90 % of the total weekly production (Nobre et al., 2001). These studies have observed increased soil N_2O flux following rewetting in short-term ($\sim 12 \text{ h}–15 \text{ d}$; Table 3, Fig. 3), and an increase of N_2O flux up to 80 000 % with respect to the background conditions (Table 3, Fig. 4). Increases of forest N_2O fluxes following rewetting (9790 %) are higher than those of cropland, grassland other ecosystems (450–1250 %) (Table 2). Noteworthy, our dataset reveals that even a single wetting event can affect annual N_2O flux between 2 % and 50 % (Nobre et al., 2001; Barton et al., 2008; Goldberg et al., 2010a).

Increased soil N_2O flux following thawing has been observed in cropland (Rochette et al., 2010), grassland (Virkajärvi et al., 2010), forest (Maljanen et al., 2010), marsh (Yu et al., 2007), alpine meadow (Hu et al., 2010), and alpine tundra (Brooks et al., 1997). Laboratory incubation experiments showing similar results have been performed with agricultural (Kurganova et al., 2004), grassland (Yao et al., 2010), forest (Goldberg et al., 2008), permafrost (Elberling et al., 2010), and coastal Antarctica soils (Zhu et al., 2009). Episodic N_2O peak fluxes of up to $750 \mu\text{g N}_2\text{O-N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ (background levels of under $50 \mu\text{g N}_2\text{O-N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) were measured after freeze-thaw in arable field (Dörsch et al., 2004). Such increases usually occur when soil temperatures are close to 0°C (Christensen and Tiedje, 1990; Chen et al., 1995; Müller et al., 2003). Studies examining the thawing effect on N_2O flux have reported 6 to 35 d response following

rewetting (Table 3) and N_2O fluxes increase up to 17 000 % (Table 3, Fig. 4). Increase of N_2O flux following thawing in forest (4180 %) is higher than those of cropland, grassland and other ecosystems (750–1760 %; Table 2). Thaw-induced N_2O fluxes constituted a major component of annual N_2O fluxes from arable field (Regina et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2010), temperate grassland (Kammann et al., 1998; Müller et al., 2002), steppe (Holst et al., 2008; Wolf et al., 2010), wetland (Yu et al., 2007) and forest ecosystems (Papen and Butterbach-Bahl, 1999; Wu et al., 2010a; Guckland et al., 2010), with contributions exceeding 50 % of the annual budget in some years.

In contrast, some studies showed no response or small increased N_2O fluxes following rewetting or thawing events that did not substantially affect annual flux rates (Garcia-Montiel et al., 2003; Neill et al., 2005; Boroken and Matzner, 2009). Some studies showed reduced N_2O fluxes during drying periods, but the abruptly increased fluxes following rewetting did not compensate for the reduced or nil uptake rates during the dry period at the seasonal scale (Boroken and Matzner, 2009; Goldberg and Gebauer, 2009).

3.1.4 Nitric oxide

Nitric oxide can be produced from: (1) nitrification (Kowalchuk and Stephen, 2001); (2) denitrification (Knowles, 1982); and (3) nitrifier denitrification (Wrage et al., 2001), as described in Sect. 3.1.3. Our database contains 92 studies that measured NO and are equivalent to $\sim 27\%$ of all studies. This shows that NO is the soil gas that has received the second most attention for studying the effects of rewetting and thawing of soils.

Increases in soil NO flux following rewetting have been reported in various terrestrial ecosystems, including cropland (Guenzi et al., 1994), grazing pasture (Hutchinson and Brams, 1992), forest (Wu et al., 2010a), grassland (Hartley and Schlesinger, 2000), savanna (Martin et al., 2003), and desert (McCalley and Sparks, 2008). Laboratory incubations with grassland soil (Yao et al., 2010), grazing pasture soil (Hutchinson et al., 1993), forest soil (Dick et al., 2006), and desert soil (McCalley and Sparks, 2008) have reported similar results of increased NO flux after rewetting. Rewetting studies have commonly reported a short-term increase in NO fluxes (ca. 1–3 d; Table 3, Fig. 3), and the rate of increase of NO flux ranged from 40 % to more than 800 000 % (Table 3, Fig. 4). Increase of NO flux following rewetting in grassland (47 800 %) is higher than those of cropland, forest and other ecosystems (1000–4900 %; Table 2). Some studies indicate that even a single rewetting event could substantially affect the annual flux rates of NO (Davidson et al., 1991; Yienger and Levy, 1995; Kitzler et al., 2006), and rewetting events could be important for regional fluxes (Harris et al., 1996; Ghude et al., 2010).

Increased soil NO fluxes following thawing have been observed only in a field study (Laville et al., 2011) and in a

Table 3. Summary of effects of soil rewetting and thawing on soil N₂O, NO and NH₃ fluxes. Number of field observations (F) and number of laboratory experiments (L): rewetting of dry soils (N₂O *n* = 58, NO *n* = 87 and NH₃ *n* = 8) and thawing of frozen soils (N₂O *n* = 78, NO *n* = 5).

Gas type	Event	Observed ecosystems	Peak periods (d) ^{a,b}	Change rate (%) ^{a,c}	Mechanism	Driver
N ₂ O	Rewetting	Croplands, forests, grasslands, savannas, fen.	F: 2 (0.5–15), L: 4 (3–8)	F: 800 (102–83 233), L: 4100 (100–439 700)	1. Microbial metabolism can be enhanced by the availability of accumulated substrate during soil drying periods. 2. Rewetting could disrupt soil aggregates, exposing physically protected organic matter and increase the accessibility of substrate that can be rapidly mineralized. 3. Physical mechanisms involving infiltration, reduced diffusivity and gas displacement in the soil can influence gas flux.	Labile N soil pool, soil texture, soil water content, size of the rewetting pulse, length of drought, soil compaction.
			Thawing	Croplands, forests, grasslands, marsh, alpine tundra.	F: 35 (6–35), L: 6 (2–11)	F: 1233 (253–17 327), L: 1400 (100–100 000)
NO	Rewetting	Croplands, forests, grasslands, savannas, deserts.	F: 1 (1–3), L: 4 (0.2–7)	F: 856 (43–810 400), L: 500 (50–11 500)	1. Microbial metabolism can be enhanced by the availability of accumulated substrate during soil drying periods. 2. Physical mechanisms involving infiltration, reduced diffusivity and gas displacement in the soil can influence gas flux.	Duration and severity of antecedent dry periods, size of rewetting pulse, soil temperature, vegetation type, soil type, microbial demand for N, frequency of wetting events, previous disturbances (i.e., fire), agricultural management type.
			Thawing	Cropland, mountain meadow.	F: 400, L: 350 (40–500)	Not yet revealed.
NH ₃	Rewetting	Deserts	F: 7 (7–7), L: 2 (2–2)	F: 489 (200–1067), L: 550 (400–800)	Not yet revealed.	Cover type, soil temperature.
			Thawing	Not observed.	–	–

^a Mean (min.–max.); ^b refer to Fig. 1, results from compiled dataset analysis; ^c refer to Sect. 2.2, results from compiled dataset analysis.

laboratory incubation study (Yao et al., 2010). In a French crop field, NO fluxes following thawing increased up to $10 \text{ ng N m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ and decreased to pre-event values within 24 h, while the flux average was 1.7 to $2.3 \text{ ng N m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in two years (Laville et al., 2011). Incubation with the soils of steppe, mountain meadow, sand dune, and marshland in Inner Mongolia showed that NO fluxes were $0.5\text{--}8.0 \text{ } \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ at $-10 \text{ } ^\circ\text{C}$ and they increased to around $30 \text{ } \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ following thawing (at $5 \text{ } ^\circ\text{C}$) (Yao et al., 2010).

3.1.5 Ammonia

Soil NH_3 is primarily produced when ammonium ions (NH_4^+) dissociate into gaseous NH_3 under alkaline conditions, and NH_3 flux is sensitive to soil conditions that influence NH_4^+ concentrations (Schlesinger and Peterjohn, 1991; McCalley and Sparks, 2008). Our database contains only 8 studies that measured NH_3 . This shows that NH_3 is the soil gas that has received the least attention for studying the effects of rewetting and thawing of soils.

Increases in soil NH_3 flux following rewetting have been observed mainly in deserts (Schlesinger and Peterjohn, 1991; McCalley and Sparks, 2008). In the Chihuahuan Desert, USA, simulated rainfall increased NH_3 fluxes from $15 \text{ } \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ to $95 \text{ } \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ within 24 h and the fluxes declined as the soils dried during the next 7 days (Schlesinger and Peterjohn, 1991). Similarly, increased NH_3 fluxes following a natural rainfall were 5–10 times higher than pre-rain fluxes in the Mojave Desert, USA (McCalley and Sparks, 2008). Studies examining how rewetting affects NH_3 flux have commonly reported 7 d response following rewetting (Table 3), with the rate of NH_3 flux increase ranging from 200 % to $> 1000 \text{ } \%$ (Table 3, Fig. 4). To our knowledge, no study has looked at changes in soil NH_3 flux following thawing.

3.2 Mechanisms for soil gas flux response to rewetting and thawing

3.2.1 Common mechanisms among soil gas fluxes

Two broad mechanisms responsible for changed soil gas flux following rewetting and thawing have been commonly hypothesized: (1) enhanced microbial metabolism by substrate supply, and (2) physical mechanisms.

First, microbial metabolism can be enhanced by the availability of accumulated substrates during soil drying and frozen periods that become available as solutes in water after rewetting or thawing of soils. A large proportion of microorganisms, fine roots and mycorrhiza die during drought and frozen conditions (Clein and Schimel, 1994; Teepe et al., 2001; Wolf et al., 2010, Supplementary information); these dead cells tend to have low C:N ratios and could rapidly decompose during rewetting (Kieft et al., 1987; Van Gestel et al., 1993) and thawing (Priemé and Christensen, 2001;

Yergeau and Kowalchuk, 2008). Microorganisms accumulate high concentrations of solutes (osmolytes) to retain water inside the cell during drought conditions (Harris, 1981), which rapidly decompose on rewetting (Fierer and Schimel, 2003; Schimel et al., 2007). Dry–wet and freeze–thaw could disrupt soil aggregates, exposing physically protected organic matter and increase the accessibility of substrate that can be rapidly mineralized (Groffman and Tiedje, 1988; Appel, 1998; Pesaró et al., 2003; Grogan et al., 2004). Furthermore, root exudates from reviving plants following rewetting could significantly affect soil surface flux (Crow and Wieder, 2005; Curiel Yuste et al., 2007).

Second, physical mechanisms that can influence gas flux include infiltration, reduced diffusivity, and gas displacement in the soil (Jensen et al., 1996; Huxman et al., 2004). For example, the infiltration of rainwater may displace CO_2 that accumulates in soil pore spaces during dry periods (Huxman et al., 2004; Marañón-Jiménez et al., 2011). Changing atmospheric pressure (e.g., under windy conditions) can also create Venturi and other pressure effects that suppress or enhance soil-to-air gas fluxes (Xu et al., 2006). In the following sections, we discuss the characteristic mechanisms responsible for changes in fluxes for each soil gas.

3.2.2 Carbon dioxide

The mechanisms responsible for increased CO_2 flux following rewetting and thawing have been commonly hypothesized as belonging to two categories: (1) enhanced microbial metabolism, and (2) the physical mechanisms described above (Sect. 3.2.1). Importantly, the relative contribution of autotrophic or heterotrophic activity to changes in CO_2 fluxes following rewetting and thawing is still poorly understood. In a Mediterranean dehesa, autotrophic activity was dominant during drought periods but heterotrophic activity became dominant for CO_2 fluxes following rewetting events (Casals et al., 2011).

Possible explanations for the reduced soil CO_2 flux rates during or after rainfall are: (1) increased accumulation of rain water in the soil pore space that reduces soil CO_2 diffusivity rates (Rochette et al., 1991; Šimunek and Suarez, 1993), and (2) restriction of the soil macro-porosity by rainfall that reduces soil air-filled pore space, enhances anaerobiosis and reduces aerobic respiration (Linn and Doran, 1984; Ball et al., 1999; Davidson et al., 2000).

3.2.3 Methane

In general, CH_4 production rates are controlled by the availability of suitable substrates, alternative electron acceptors for competing redox reactions (i.e., sulfate reduction), the nutritional status of the ecosystem (i.e., bog versus fen), water table position or soil moisture content, temperature, and soil salinity (Thauer, 1998; Hanson and Hanson, 1996; Dutaur and Verchot, 2007).

The mechanisms underlying changes in CH₄ flux following rewetting and thawing are complex because they involve the response of both methanogenesis and methanotrophy to changes in availability of substrates, soil environment, particularly soil moisture, and availability of electron donors and acceptors that determine the redox status of soil. Additionally, changes to the physical soil environment can indirectly influence CH₄ flux by affecting vegetation composition and abundance as well as the tendency for soils to store bubbles. Rewetting can increase the availability of water-soluble C substrates (Zsolnay and Görlitz, 1994; Stark and Firestone, 1995; Sect. 3.2.1) that are being used by soil methanotrophs (Whittenbury et al., 1970). In unfrozen soils, there was no correlation between soil temperature and CH₄ consumption, suggesting strong substrate limitation on methanotrophs (Borken et al., 2006). Borken et al. (2006) also found that methanotrophs were stressed when water contents were below 0.15 g cm⁻³ (in the A horizon), thus rewetting could alleviate osmotic stress and promote the growth and activity of soil methanotrophs (Schnell and King, 1994; West and Schmidt, 1998). While several studies have shown that experimental drought increased CH₄ consumption rates (cf. Borken et al., 2006; Davidson et al., 2008), Fiedler et al. (2008) found no evidence of increased methanotrophy in response to natural drought in forest soils. Methanotrophs responded quickly to water table manipulations in peat soil (Blodau and Moore, 2003). Rewetting also can inhibit methanotrophic activity in more poorly drained soils, for example, if oxygen diffusion becomes limiting (Striegl, 1993). Because methanogenesis requires anaerobic soil conditions, drought typically suppresses CH₄ production, while rewetting increases it. Methanogenic populations require some time to re-establish after rewetting (Fetzer et al., 1993).

In addition to environmental controls, both methanotrophy and methanogenesis are sensitive to interactions and competition with other microbial redox processes. Drying and rewetting of soils can increase SO₄ pools through remineralization of organic sulfate and/or reoxidation of iron sulfides. This can stimulate sulfate reduction and effectively suppress methanogenesis (cf. Blodau and Moore, 2003). In thick organic soils, this is more likely to occur in surface layers that experience fluctuating water tables than in more saturated, deeper peat layers (Goldammer and Blodau, 2008).

Freezing increases substrate availability (Sect. 3.2.1) and limits diffusive transport of gases (including O₂) into and out of soil, which could promote methanogenesis and the storage of CH₄ in deeper soil layers (Yu et al., 2007). Also, CH₄ typically accumulates subsurface in snow or ice covered ecosystems. During thawing periods, the diffusion barriers disappear and trapped CH₄ is released to the atmosphere (Friborg et al., 1997; Yu et al., 2007). Methane emissions were independent of temperature < 0 °C (Friborg et al., 1997; Yu et al., 2007), suggesting that biological activity is not the dominant control on soil CH₄ flux during early soil thaw. As the

soil active layer becomes thicker, soil CH₄ fluxes is driven by soil aeration and redox controls on methanotrophy and methanogenesis, as described above for rewetting. In particular, due to poor drainage of melting snow and seasonal ice, thawing can create saturated surface soils in the active layer, which can favour CH₄ production (Thauer, 1998) and suppress methanotrophy. In contrast, Ding and Cai (2007) found that low temperatures reduced microbial activity of some aerobic microbes, and the resulting presence of more O₂ in soil increased methanotrophy and reduced methanogenesis. Overall, to our knowledge the mechanisms responsible for the various response of CH₄ to rewetting and thawing have not been clearly explored and further research is needed to identify the mechanisms controlling the response after rewetting and thawing across ecosystems.

3.2.4 Nitrous oxide

The mechanisms responsible for increased N₂O flux following rewetting have been commonly hypothesized as belonging to two categories: (1) enhanced microbial metabolism, and (2) the physical mechanisms described above (Sect. 3.2.1). Similarly, the enhanced substrate supply described above (Sect. 3.2.1) and physical mechanisms have been hypothesized as responsible for increased N₂O fluxes following thawing. The hypothesized physical mechanisms for increased N₂O fluxes following thawing are: first, anaerobic water-saturated topsoil conditions are created during thawing by reduced drainage of melting ice and snow in the frozen subsoil, and these conditions are known to increase N₂O fluxes (Li et al., 2000; de Bruijn et al., 2009). Second, ice layers prevent N₂O exchange between topsoil and atmosphere and during thawing periods, the diffusion barriers disappear, and the trapped N₂O is released into the atmosphere within a few days (Goldberg et al., 2010b; Virkajärvi et al., 2010). Increased N₂O fluxes following thawing may be caused by the combination of these two mechanisms (Koponen et al., 2006; de Bruijn et al., 2009).

Enhanced nutrient supply from soil freezing has been accepted as one of the mechanisms to explain abruptly increased N₂O fluxes. However, Hentschel et al. (2009) found that moderate soil freezing did not affect solute losses of N, DOC, and mineral ions from temperate forest soils, and argued that their results did not support the hypothesis that N₂O peak fluxes are caused by the enhanced nutrient supply from soil freezing (Goldberg et al., 2010b). While it has been argued that N₂O peak flux at spring thaw was mostly produced in the surface layer (Müller et al., 2002; Furon et al., 2008; Wagner-Riddle et al., 2008), Goldberg et al. (2010b) found that released N₂O in soil thawing was due to a slow release of subsoil N₂O and a delayed activation of N₂O reductase in the topsoil after soil frost due to low soil temperatures.

The relative contribution of specific microbial processes (e.g., nitrification, denitrification and nitrifier denitrification) to changes in N_2O fluxes following rewetting and thawing is still poorly understood, although several studies have found denitrification to be a major contribution process in N_2O fluxes following rewetting (Groffman and Tiedje, 1988; Priemé and Christensen, 2001) and thawing (Mørkvéd et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2006; Wagner-Riddle et al., 2008).

3.2.5 Nitric oxide

The mechanisms responsible for increased NO fluxes following rewetting have been commonly hypothesized as belonging to the two categories: (1) enhanced microbial metabolism by substrate supply, and (2) physical mechanisms described above (Sect. 3.2.1). Several studies found that nitrification is the dominant source of increased NO flux following wetting of dry soils (Davidson, 1992a; Davidson et al., 1993; Hutchinson et al., 1993).

3.2.6 Ammonia

The mechanisms responsible for the response of NH_3 to rewetting have not been explored to our knowledge. We hypothesized that increase in NH_4^+ caused by enhanced N mineralization following rewetting (Tomoaki Morishita, unpublished data) and rewetting promotes reaction between NH_4^+ and OH^- , without biota (James Raich, unpublished data) results in increased NH_3 flux.

3.3 Drivers for soil gas flux response to rewetting and thawing

3.3.1 Carbon dioxide

The magnitude of CO_2 flux increases following rewetting may depend on: (1) the size of the soil organic pool; (2) the quality of organic matter, determined by its age, origin, and the extent to which these substrates are protected from microbial attack by adsorption to clay surfaces and inclusion in micro-aggregates; and (3) the properties of soil biota (Van Gestel et al., 1993). Soil moisture conditions before rewetting also influence the response (Orchard and Cook, 1983; Cable et al., 2008; Harms and Grimm, 2012), as can the length and severity of drought periods (Unger et al., 2010), and rain pulse size (Sponseller, 2007; Chen et al., 2009). Based on our literature review, we identified the existence of a threshold in soil moisture at 12–20 % gravimetric moisture content, below which a substantial increase in soil CO_2 flux after rewetting is typically observed (Davidson et al., 1998; Xu and Qi, 2001; Rey et al., 2002; Yuste et al., 2003; Dilustro et al., 2005; Cable et al., 2008; Chou et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2010b; Misson et al., 2010).

The effects of rewetting may decline with successive drying and rewetting cycles, possibly as a result of a limited pool of labile substrates that have built up over time or during

the dry season (Schimel and Mikan, 2005; Goldberg et al., 2008). Importantly, Fernández et al. (2006) suggested that substrate availability, rather than soil moisture, influenced the duration of the CO_2 pulse in response to rain events, while Vargas et al. (2010b) noted that CO_2 flux pulses may be driven not only by labile substrate availability, but also by plant photosynthesis rates following the rain event. It can be difficult to separate the often-confounded factors controlling CO_2 flux pulses, requiring measurement of microbial communities, isotopic composition, and/or precise flux timing. For example, Unger et al. (2012) used $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ to separate out the effects of soil moisture versus substrate availability in an oak woodland. In addition, management practice (mowing or tillage) (Steenwerth et al., 2010), vegetation type (Shi et al., 2011) and high soil temperatures (Jager and Bruins, 1975; Borke et al., 1999) could influence the magnitude of the response of soil CO_2 flux following rewetting of dry soils.

The magnitude of increased CO_2 flux following thawing is controlled by characteristics of thawing events. For example, frozen soils in colder temperatures show greater increase of CO_2 flux following thawing, possibly as a result of higher amounts of substrate accumulated in colder temperatures (Matzner and Borke, 2008; Goldberg et al., 2008). Another known factor is freeze-thaw cycle frequency, where the largest CO_2 flux increase commonly occurs in the first thawing event (among repeated freezing–thawing cycles), with the effects declining in following cycles (Priemé and Christensen, 2001; Kurganova and Tipe, 2003; Goldberg et al., 2008) due to limited pool of labile substrates that have built up over time (Priemé and Christensen, 2001; Goldberg et al., 2008).

3.3.2 Methane

To our knowledge, the drivers responsible for the magnitude of change in soil CH_4 flux following rewetting and thawing have not been clearly explored. We recommend that further research is needed to identify the drivers controlling the response after rewetting and thawing across ecosystems. The lack of understanding about drivers from CH_4 fluxes is reflected in the low percentage of studies (~ 7 %) in our database.

3.3.3 Nitrous oxide

The magnitude of increased N_2O flux caused by the wetting of dry soils varies, depending on the labile N soil pool (Van Gestel et al., 1993; Schaeffer et al., 2003), soil texture (Appel, 1998; Austin et al., 2004), soil water content (Appel, 1998), the size of the rewetting pulse (Ruser et al., 2006; Yanai et al., 2007), length of drought (van Haren et al., 2005), and soil compaction (Uchida et al., 2008; Beare et al., 2009). A significant relationship between the organic N extracted from dried soil samples and the magnitude of N_2O flushes following soil drying–rewetting has been observed (Appel,

1998). Field and laboratory studies with arid and semiarid soils, fine-textured soils with higher water-holding capacity and labile C and N pools compared with coarse-textured soils, showed a greater flush of N₂O flux following rewetting (Austin et al., 2004). In an incubation experiment with soils from a potato field, the amount of increase in N₂O flux following rewetting was enhanced with the amount of water added (Ruser et al., 2006). Furthermore, in another experiment with soils from a field compaction trial, the production of N₂O during the first 24 h following rewetting of dry soil was nearly 20 times higher in compacted than in uncompacted soil (Beare et al., 2009).

The magnitude of increased N₂O flux following thawing of frozen soils is influenced by soil texture (Christensen and Christensen, 1991; Lemke, 1998), crop species (Kaiser et al., 1998; Johnson et al., 2010), forest type (Teepe and Ludwig, 2004), tillage history (Singurindy et al., 2009), soil water content (Koponen and Martikainen, 2004; Wolf et al., 2010), the length of the freezing period (Papen and Butterbach-Bahl, 1999; Wagner-Riddle et al., 2007; Dietzel et al., 2011), and the degree of ice formation (Wagner-Riddle et al., 2010). Soils with clay-dominated aggregates are prone to high N₂O flux during thawing periods (van Bochove et al., 2000; Müller et al., 2003). However, there is little information on the subsequent effect of soil water content on N₂O fluxes (Röver et al., 1998; van Bochove et al., 2000). For example, Röver et al. (1998) measured large fluxes of N₂O after freezing in an agricultural soil at 80 % water-filled pore space, while van Bochove et al. (2000) reported that the N₂O fluxes from a clay soil were significantly larger at a volumetric water content of 39 % than at 28 %.

3.3.4 Nitric oxide

The magnitude of increased NO flux can be influenced by the duration and severity of antecedent dry periods (Butterbach-Bahl et al., 2004; McCalley and Sparks, 2008), change in soil moisture (Yienger and Levy, 1995) and temperature (Smart et al., 1999; McCalley and Sparks, 2008), vegetation type (Barger et al., 2005; McCalley and Sparks, 2008), soil type (Martin et al., 2003), microbial demand for N (Stark et al., 2002), frequency of wetting events (Davidson et al., 1991; Hartley and Schlesinger, 2000), previous disturbances (Levine et al., 1988; Poth et al., 1995), and agricultural management (Hutchinson and Brams, 1992). Interestingly, there are conflicting results on the magnitude of increased NO flux after rewetting, which were independent of both the size of rewetting pulse (Davidson, 1992b; Martin et al., 1998) and the periods of antecedent dry days (Martin et al., 1998). Also, other reports have suggested that lower amounts of water addition result in higher NO pulses (Hutchinson et al., 1997; Dick et al., 2001). These conflicting results emphasize the uncertainty and limitations of predicting the magnitude of NO flux responses to soil rewetting.

3.3.5 Ammonia

The magnitude of increased NH₃ flux following rewetting of dry soils may be influenced by land cover type and soil temperature (Schlesinger and Peterjohn, 1991; McCalley and Sparks, 2008).

However, it is important to recognize the lack of studies on soil NH₃ flux represented in our database (~ 2 %).

4 Effects of rewetting and thawing on soil gas fluxes: analysis of a database

Here we present results from an analysis of the database “A Global Database of Gas Fluxes from Soils after Rewetting or Thawing, Version 1.0”. We found that increases in CO₂, N₂O and NO fluxes following rewetting were negatively correlated to pre-change flux (total $n = 112$; Fig. 5, Table 4); that is, soils producing lower gas fluxes in dry conditions showed greater flux increases following rewetting. This likely occurs because drier soil conditions cause lower soil gas fluxes, but also greater accumulation of substrates, promoting large fluxes following rewetting (Orchard and Cook, 1983; Yanai et al., 2007; Unger et al., 2010). This finding is consistent with results from many previous studies (Orchard and Cook, 1983; Ruser et al., 2006; Yanai et al., 2007; Cable et al., 2008).

We also found a positive relationship between N₂O flux increases following thawing and mean annual temperature (MAT) ($n = 21$; Fig. 6, Table 5), implying that soils in warmer climates exhibit greater N₂O flux increases following thawing than colder climate soils. This result contrasts with previous individual studies showing that colder and longer-frozen soils have greater flux increases following thawing (Papen and Butterbach-Bahl, 1999; Wagner-Riddle et al., 2007, 2010; Dietzel et al., 2011). A partial explanation may be that warmer regions have higher labile substrate inputs (i.e., fine roots, microbial biomass, soil organic matters), which accumulate in soils during frozen periods and contribute to larger gas fluxes following thawing.

Finally, we found that CO₂ flux responses were positively related with MAT, while N₂O and NO flux responses were negatively related to MAT (all marginally significant) ($n = 82$; Fig. 6, Table 5). These relationships are not well explained by our current understanding about mechanisms and drivers of gas flux increase following rewetting, and further studies are needed to determine if these patterns can be generalized to other sites and regions.

Table 4. Summary statistics of relationship between mean pre-change flux and flux change (i.e. peak flux as a percentage of pre-event flux) by gas and rewetting or thawing (Fig. 5).

Event type	Gas type	Intercept	Slope	Slope F-statistic	Slope p-value
Rewetting	CO ₂	4.527 ± 0.296	-0.902 ± 0.125	52.35	< 0.0001
Rewetting	N ₂ O	2.478 ± 0.250	-0.421 ± 0.130	10.53	0.003
Rewetting	NO	2.578 ± 0.175	-0.242 ± 0.102	5.601	0.021

Table 5. Summary statistics of relationship between mean annual temperature and flux change (i.e. peak flux as a percentage of pre-event flux) by gas and rewetting or thawing (Fig. 6).

Event type	Gas type	Intercept	Slope	Slope F-statistic	Slope p-value
Rewetting	CO ₂	2.133 ± 0.214	0.037 ± 0.021	3.315	0.089
Rewetting	N ₂ O	3.800 ± 0.347	-0.033 ± 0.017	3.871	0.058
Rewetting	NO	4.055 ± 0.333	-0.036 ± 0.017	3.619	0.072
Thawing	N ₂ O	2.540 ± 0.280	0.154 ± 0.049	10	0.005

5 Knowledge gaps and future directions

5.1 Challenges in understanding the responses and mechanisms of soil gas fluxes

Overall, the scientific community lacks a good understanding of both the responses and mechanisms of soil gases following rewetting or thawing and their impact on annual budgets. Many studies report the magnitude of peak flux or increased rate of flux following rewetting or thawing, but often do not identify: (1) whether peak fluxes are significantly different from fluxes of pre-drought or pre-frozen periods, (2) the change in soil moisture or soil temperature, (3) the time lag between rewetting or thawing events and peak fluxes, (4) peak flux durations, (5) cumulative emissions in peak fluxes, and (6) their contributions to annual budgets. Efforts to collect such information will contribute to improving our understanding of the response of gas fluxes to rewetting and thawing events. Compared to CO₂ and N₂O fluxes, our understanding of the effect of rewetting and thawing on CH₄, NO and NH₃ fluxes and mechanisms and drivers of the variation is limited, as shown in our database. We encourage the scientific community to perform experiments and observations to better understand their magnitudes and mechanisms.

Changes in the relative proportion of CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃ (e.g., CO₂/CH₄; CO₂/N₂O) emitted following rewetting and thawing compared with that of pre-disturbance conditions are poorly understood. To report these ratios and the change, additional efforts are required to conduct multiple gases measurements. This is important since the different mechanisms would be involved in changing the relative proportion of the emissions and a good understanding of the variation of the relative proportion could improve our understanding of the impact of rewetting or thawing on annual gas budgets.

How soils underlying different vegetation types respond to rewetting and thawing events (Teepe and Ludwig, 2004; Matzner and Borken, 2008; Kim et al., 2010b; Shi et al., 2011) is also a research frontier. This is important because different vegetation types can have different phenologies and photosynthesis rates (Vargas et al., 2010b), nutrient cycling rates in detritus (Vogt et al., 1986), and soils (Borken and Beese, 2005; Paré et al., 2006). Plant-mediated effects on soil microclimate, such as soil temperature and soil moisture (Raich and Schlesinger, 1992; Aussenac, 2000), and plant mediated effects on root, rhizomorph (Vargas and Allen, 2008) and mycorrhizae (Heinemeyer et al., 2012) dynamics are also only beginning to be explored. Novel mechanisms and pathways by which plants emit gas have been explored recently (Smart and Bloom, 2001; Pihlatie et al., 2005; Kepler et al., 2006; Aubrey and Teskey, 2009; Gauci et al., 2010), but how these pathways respond to rewetting or thawing events are not well understood. Furthermore, the relative importance of source processes responsible for the increased fluxes of CO₂ (i.e., autotrophic or heterotrophic activity), NO and N₂O (i.e., nitrification, denitrification or nitrifier denitrification) is poorly understood. Finally, the effect of rewetting and thawing on dissolved soil gas has been only rarely studied (Matzner and Borken, 2008). To our knowledge, there is only one study showing indirect evidence of this effect, which found that in spring rainfall after thawing increased concentration of dissolved N₂O in soil solutions in forest (Xu et al., 2009). These results suggest that the increased N₂O following rewetting can be dissolved in the soil solution (Xu et al., 2009). This N₂O in the soil solution can drain to surface or groundwater, and be a source of indirect N₂O flux (IPCC, 2006). It is therefore important to understand and quantify the effect of rewetting and thawing on dissolved soil gases.

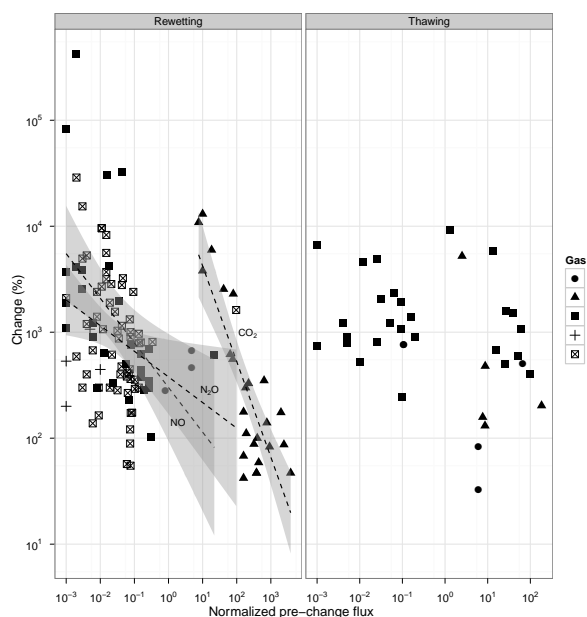


Fig. 5. Pre-change flux (normalized to common units of $\text{mg gas m}^{-2} \text{h}^{-1}$ for field measurements, and $\text{mg gas kg}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$ for lab incubations) versus flux change (i.e. peak flux as a percentage of pre-event flux), by gas and rewetting or thawing. Only statistically significant relationships (for CO_2 , N_2O and NO on left) are shown.

5.2 Temporal and spatial resolution

Considering the short response time and short effective period of the pulse in soil gas fluxes, many peak fluxes might have been missed in previous studies (see Fig. 2), as frequently only a few manual measurements were used (Joos et al., 2010; Maljanen et al., 2010). The lack of temporal sampling resolution may also influence the estimation of annual fluxes. In contrast, substantial rewetting effects have been frequently observed with automated chamber systems (Borken et al., 1999: 4–5 observations per day), eddy covariance methods (cf. Lee et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2010a), and automated measurements of soil CO_2 profiles (Vargas et al., 2010b). Such continuous flux measurements during and after pulse events will help calculate the temporal dynamics and the total contribution to the cumulative flux and annual flux (Maljanen et al., 2010; Vargas et al., 2010a). When manual chamber methods have to be used, more frequent measurements (Smith and Dobbie, 2001; Parkin, 2008) or measurements coinciding with rewetting or thawing events (Beare et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2010b) should be considered.

Most studies have explored the effects of rewetting and thawing at small spatial scales (i.e., plot level). Thus, a critical issue is how to scale up to the ecosystem, landscape or continental scale. Rewetting and thawing pulses may be patchily distributed in space, and without measurements in various spatial and temporal scales (i.e., chambers, eddy covariance, upscaling through remote sensing) it is difficult

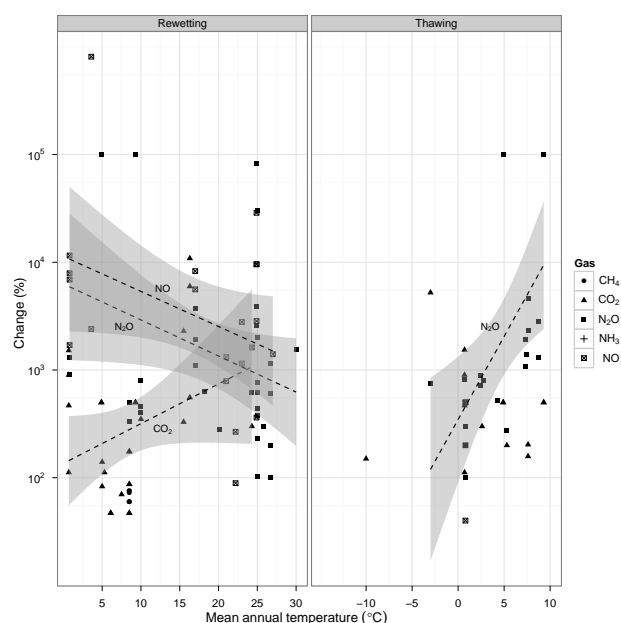


Fig. 6. Mean annual temperature versus flux change (i.e. peak flux as a percentage of pre-event flux), by gas and rewetting or thawing. Only statistically significant relationships (for CO_2 , N_2O and NO on left, and N_2O on right) are shown.

to evaluate the impacts of these events across regions of the Earth. Although multi-spatial scale sampling is needed, we recognize that there is frequently a cost trade-off between temporal sampling and spatial sampling. However, with improving technologies and the growth of continental and global networks (i.e., NEON, ICOS, FLUXNET), multi-temporal and multi-scale experiments will become more common in the near future.

5.3 Experimental designs

To test the effect of rewetting and thawing on soil gas flux, controlled experiments have been frequently conducted both in field and laboratory settings using, for example, rainfall exclusions (Borken et al., 2006; Davidson et al., 2008), snow removal (Groffman et al., 2006; Maljanen et al., 2007), and soil cores incubated in the lab (Panikov and Dedysh, 2000). However, these conditions may not accurately simulate natural conditions (Henry, 2007). Future experiments might: (1) simulate drying-rewetting and freezing-thawing based on historical or projected extreme events, the latter under multiple climate change scenarios (Jentsch et al., 2007); (2) collect soil samples in the appropriate season and include relevant surface factors such as plant litter in the autumn or excess water in the spring (Henry, 2007); and (3) develop new methods for simulating field conditions more closely in the laboratory (Hu et al., 2006). Future studies could benefit from these approaches in combination with high-temporal frequency resolution using automated flux measurements.

An area of significant promise involves combining microbial community analyses (Kim et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2010; Sawicka et al., 2009) and/or stable isotope techniques (Wagner-Riddle et al., 2008; Goldberg and Gebauer, 2009; Gaudinski et al., 2009; Unger et al., 2012) with flux measurements. Whether performed in the lab or field, such experiments could improve our understanding of rewetting and thawing effect on soil gas fluxes, identifying source processes and mechanisms and quantifying their contributions to overall responses.

5.4 Model improvement

Models are promising tools for evaluating the importance of drying-rewetting and freeze-thaw events (Groffman et al., 2009). Simple linear regressions and empirical models have been developed based on the relationships between environmental factors, including soil moisture and/or soil temperature and soil gas fluxes (Roelandt et al., 2005; Flechard et al., 2007). Some rely on empirical observations but fail under rewetting or thawing conditions (Borken et al., 2003; Lawrence et al., 2009). We propose that further work in this area will increasingly have to incorporate non-linearities in the flux response and the actual substrate and microbial dynamics occurring (Davidson and Janssens, 2006; Vargas et al., 2011).

Process-based models have been developed with the objective of simulating terrestrial ecosystem C and N biogeochemistry including GHGs (e.g. DAYCENT, Parton et al., 2001; DNDC, Li et al., 1992; ecosys, Grant and Partey, 2003). Most existing process-based models require additional work to improve simulating rewetting and thawing effect on soil gas fluxes (Jarecki et al., 2009; Norman et al., 2008; Kariyapperuma et al., 2011; Wolf et al., 2012). Groffman et al. (2009) suggested that modelling peak fluxes associated with drying and rewetting events requires: (1) accurate simulation of moisture changes in different soil layers and complex shifts in utilisation of fast- and slow-cycling soil organic matter pools by microbes that take place during these events (Miller et al., 2005), and (2) daily or sub-daily simulations of both physical and biological processes (Kiese et al., 2005). They also suggested that the modelling of freeze-thaw induced N₂O fluxes requires consideration of the increase in easily degradable substrates following freezing, tight coupling of nitrification and denitrification in the water saturated topsoil, and the breakdown of N₂O reductase activity at low temperature (Holtan-Hartwig et al., 2002). Another process-based modelling study found that including decreases in hydraulic conductivity in frozen soil improved the simulation of pulse N₂O emissions following thawing (Wolf et al., 2012). Regardless of the specific process under consideration, it is critical to enhance the communication between field scientists and the modelling community, as models can be used to generate hypotheses (de Bruijn et al., 2009) to be tested in the field and laboratory.

6 Conclusions

Rewetting and thawing events are important short-term transitional and non-stationary phenomena in terms of hydrology and the thermodynamics of soil systems. Through this review and the compiled database, we identified that major soil gases such as CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, NO and NH₃ are influenced substantially by these events. The responses of these gases to rewetting and thawing events are critical for our understanding of C and N dynamics and land-atmosphere gas exchange. The mechanisms that control these fluxes during rewetting and thawing events are not fully understood, but enhanced microbial metabolism by substrate supply and changed soil physical properties influencing gas flux are accepted as the main mechanisms responsible for changes in all the gases we considered. An analysis of the compiled dataset showed that lower initial (pre-change) fluxes of CO₂, N₂O and NO tend to be associated with greater flux increases following rewetting. Additionally, increases in N₂O flux following thawing were greater in warmer climate soils than in colder soils. Future climatic change is likely to alter the frequency and intensity of drying-rewetting events and thawing of frozen soils. Thus, rewetting and thawing events could become more critical for land-atmosphere gas exchange and may be more important to incorporate in biogeochemical models. Advancements in this research field are likely to come from high frequency measurements of gas fluxes, soil microbial analyses, isotope measurements, and stronger collaborations between the process-based modelling community and the experimental scientific community.

Appendix A

A Blog for open discussion and web based open databases

We have created a blog (web-based discussion) entitled “Rewetting, thawing and soil gas fluxes” (<http://rewettingandthawing.blogspot.com/>) and we have uploaded a current version of this review paper section by section as an individual post in the Blog; comments can be left under the separate posts. An open-access database, which can be modified by the users, is linked to the Blog: “Rewetting, thawing and soil gas fluxes database” (https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjWu6bR8SA9idHY4Tk5TdDZDMWgtMEJsUVhFOWhKLWc&hl=en_US). The database contains detailed information in the reported studies on soil gas peak flux following rewetting and thawing. The database is hosted in web-based spreadsheets and is easily accessible and modified. The authors do not have any relationship with the companies currently being used to host the Blog and databases. Finally, version 1 of this database has been archived at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory Distributed Active Archive Center (http://daac.ornl.gov/SOILS/guides/global_rtsg_flux_

v1.html; A Global Database of Gas Fluxes from Soils after Rewetting or Thawing, Version 1.0) and is available for reproducing the results presented in this study.

Acknowledgements. We are grateful for the numerous researchers and technicians who provided invaluable data. It is impossible to cite all the references due to limited space allowed and we apologize for the authors whose work has not been cited. We are also grateful to Yit Arn Teh, Gerhard Gebauer, James Raich, Kevin Tate, Klaus Butterbach-Bahl, Miko Kirschbaum, Tom Misselbrook, Tomoaki Morishita, Sara Marañón-Jiménez, Stephan Unger, Ana Rey and an anonymous reviewer for constructive and valuable comments. We thank Leslie Hook at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory Distributed Active Archive Center, and Anne Austin for editing. R.V. was partially funded by CONACyT grants (145074, 152671) while writing this manuscript.

Edited by: M. Bahn

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