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A review of glacier outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland with a megafloods perspective

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Contents

16	1.	Introduction and aims	3
17	1.1	Defining megafloods	
18	2.	Data sources and methods.....	5
19	3.	Glacier outburst floods in Iceland.....	5
20	3.1	Ice-dammed lake drainage in Iceland	6
21	3.2	Volcanically-generated jökulhlaups in Iceland	8
22	3.3	Jökulsá á Fjöllum.....	11
23	3.4	Katla.....	15
24	4.	Glacier outburst floods in Greenland.....	17
25	4.1	Isvand.....	19
26	4.2	Russell Glacier	19
27	4.3	Kuannersuit Glacier	21
28	4.4	Lake Tininnilik.....	21
29	4.5	Unnamed lakes near the Amitsuloq Ice Cap.....	22
30	4.6	Iluliallup Tasersua.....	24
31	4.7	Ice-dammed lakes in Johan Dahl Land	25
32	4.8	Qorlortorssup Tasia.....	27
33	4.9	Ice-dammed lakes in Frederikshåb region	28
34	4.10	A. P. Olsen Ice Cap.....	30
35	5.	The geological record of outburst floods from Iceland and Greenland.....	32
36	6.	Future large glacier outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland.....	34
37	7.	Summary and conclusions	35

39 Abstract

40 The very largest glacier outburst floods have been termed ‘megafloods’ given their volume and
41 peak discharge. That definition might be revised because those floods have become understood
42 due to their distinctive and pervasive landscape impacts. At least three floods in Iceland can be
43 categorized as megafloods since they produced impressive bedrock canyons and giant
44 fluvially-transported boulders. Glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in Greenland might also
45 have megaflood-type attributes given the enormous lake volumes drained. We therefore here
46 present the first review of glacier outburst floods in Greenland: sites Isvand, Russell Glacier,
47 Kuannersuit Glacier, Lake Tininnilik, two unnamed lakes near Amitsuloq Ice Cap, and
48 Iluliallup Tasersua, Base Camp Lake, Lake Hullett, Qorlortorssup Tasia, Imaersartog,
49 Tordensø, North Midternæs and an outlet glacier of the A. P. Olsen Ice Cap. Overall,
50 megaflood-type landscape impacts in Iceland tend to be best-preserved and most easily
51 identified inland although there has also been extensive offshore sedimentation. There are very
52 few reported impacts of glacier outburst floods in Greenland. In Greenland ice-dam failure
53 causes frequent flooding compared to the volcanically-triggered floods in Iceland and this
54 combined with the proximity of the Greenland glacier lakes to the coast means that most
55 proglacial channels in Greenland are flood-hardened and most landscape impact is likely to be
56 offshore in estuaries and fjords. Future floods with megaflood-type attributes will occur in
57 Iceland induced by volcanic activity. In Greenland they will be induced by extreme weather
58 and rapid ice melt. Any potential landscape impact of these future floods remains open to
59 question.

60

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62 **Key words:** jökulhlaup; GLOF; ice-dammed lake; ice sheet; landscape impact

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70 **1. Introduction and aims**

71 Glacier outburst floods are common in Iceland from whence the term ‘jökulhlaup’ originates.
72 Significant advances in our understanding of the mechanisms, processes and impacts of such
73 floods have arisen from work undertaken in Iceland. Jökulhlaups in Iceland have threatened
74 settlements, people and hydro-electric installations on glacier-fed rivers. They have also
75 damaged tracts of land, with associated impacts on agriculture and livestock farming. Transport
76 has been affected by floods due to damage caused to roads, bridges and associated
77 infrastructure and larger jökulhlaups have generated flood waves in coastal waters (Rist, 1983;
78 Björnsson, 2002; Carrivick and Tweed, 2016).

79
80 Substantial and distinctive landscape change, as evidenced by erosional and depositional
81 landforms, has long been caused by jökulhlaups in Iceland. They have eroded large bedrock
82 canyons and transported huge quantities of sediment over outwash plains. Truly catastrophic
83 floods from the drainage of large Quaternary subglacial lakes have produced a pervasive
84 landscape impact by cutting extensive river canyons, extending the coastline and producing
85 voluminous offshore sedimentation (Björnsson, 2002). Indeed, it is these landscape impacts
86 that are often used to identify the occurrence and characteristics of extremely large jökulhlaups,
87 especially of those that occurred in prehistoric times. These Icelandic jökulhlaup landscape
88 impacts are also commonly used as analogues for megafloods, both on Earth and on Mars.

89
90 Jökulhlaups also occur frequently in Greenland, yet they have never been reviewed despite
91 having been sporadically described in the scientific literature for ~ 230 years (Fabricius, 1788;
92 Rink, 1862 both cited in Higgins 1970). Furthermore, drainages of glacier lakes in Greenland
93 have been mentioned several times in expedition reports, but without further analysis; Freuchen
94 (1915) estimated that Nyeboes Randsø in North Greenland emptied at about 25-year intervals
95 and Koch and Wegener (1930 p. 383) reported a lake near Jakobshavn Isbræ with about 10
96 years between floods. Some of the lakes that have suddenly drained in Greenland are so big
97 that there is reason to believe that jökulhlaups in Greenland, like those in Iceland, could be
98 megaflood analogues.

99
100 This paper aims to provide a review of research on glacier outburst floods from Iceland and
101 Greenland with a megafloods perspective. After an initial consideration of what constitutes a
102 megaflood, we i) consolidate the state of knowledge on jökulhlaups in Iceland; ii) provide the
103 first review of jökulhlaups in Greenland; iii) identify and explain research directions on glacier

104 floods in Iceland and Greenland and iv) evaluate Iceland and Greenland glacier floods as
105 megaflood analogues.

106

107 **1.1 Defining megafloods**

108 Floods with a peak discharge of, or greater than, $10^6\text{m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ or 1 sverdrup are defined as
109 megafloods (Baker, 2002; Carling, 2013), with the prefix ‘mega-’ applied in its strictest sense
110 to mean a million. The largest known floods on Earth are associated with glacial environments
111 (Baker, 1996; 2002). Of these largest known floods, the terrestrial floods that meet the strict
112 definition of megaflood include the sudden inundations that occurred during the Quaternary
113 from the drainage of ice-dammed lakes along the margin of the Laurentide Ice Sheet in North
114 America (e.g. Kehew and Lord, 1986; O’Connor and Baker, 1992) and from along the margins
115 of the Eurasian ice sheet (e.g. Rudoy, 1988; Carling et al, 2009; Carling et al., 2010).

116

117 Other terms such as ‘catastrophic flood’, ‘cataclysmic flood’ and ‘super flood’ are also used,
118 sometimes indiscriminately, in the literature to describe extremely large floods. Catastrophic
119 floods are considered to be events that are exceptional or rare following which the preservation
120 of erosional landforms and sedimentary evidence persists over geological timescales (Russell,
121 2005; Tweed, 2011). Taking ‘catastrophic’ or ‘extreme’ flooding to be defined by peak
122 discharge in excess of $100,000\text{ m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ (an order of magnitude less than a megaflood) Tómasson
123 (2002) claims that there are two floods each century in Iceland of this magnitude. In the absence
124 of human impacts, catastrophic or extreme might be taken to imply intense, widespread and
125 pervasive landscape impact produced in a geological instant

126

127 In his review of megaflood sedimentation, Carling (2013) included some Icelandic jökulhlaups
128 because their sedimentary signatures are similar to megafloods. Others have observed that
129 bedrock canyon systems and other erosive landforms attributed to glacial outburst floods in
130 Iceland share characteristics with those generated by recognised megafloods (e.g. Baker, 2002;
131 Waitt, 2002). In this paper, we adopt the term ‘megaflood attributes’ to recognise that flood
132 characteristics other than peak discharge, such as bed shear stresses and stream powers, are
133 also key factors in determining the severity and hence pervasiveness of the landscape impacts
134 of particular events.

135

136 **2. Data sources and methods**

137 For the novel mapping in this paper, high resolution (2 m grid mosaic) topography was obtained
138 from the Arctic DEM (Porter et al., 2018) via the Polar Geospatial Centre
139 (<https://www.pgc.umn.edu/data/arcticdem/>). High resolution (< 3 m pixel) optical wavelength
140 and multi-spectral satellite images covering the same ground space at sub-weekly intervals
141 were obtained from Planet (2017) images and with an ‘Education and Research Program’
142 licence. An outline of the Greenland Ice Sheet (GrIS) was obtained from
143 <http://imbie.org/imbie-2016/drainage-basins/> and mountain glacier and ice cap outlines were
144 obtained from <http://glims.colorado.edu/glacierdata/> (the October 2017 release). Historical
145 glacier lake outlines are those from Carrivick and Quincey (2014). Modern glacier lake outlines
146 were mapped manually using the ArcticDEM and Planet products and analysed for water
147 surface elevation, planimetric area and volume changes using the same software. Local
148 geomorphology was interpreted visually using a hillshade of the DEM.

149

150 **3. Glacier outburst floods in Iceland**

151 Icelandic jökulhlaups result from the drainage of ice-marginal and subglacial lakes (i.e. they
152 can be termed glacier lake outburst floods: GLOFs), but also from subglacial volcanism and
153 geothermal activity, which can swiftly melt vast quantities of ice (Björnsson, 2002; 2010).
154 Notable foundations for our current understanding of glacier outburst floods in Iceland include
155 Thorarinsson’s (1939) identification and discussion of ice-dammed lakes and their relationship
156 to glacier oscillations and Björnsson’s extensive publications on ice-dammed lakes,
157 volcanically-induced jökulhlaups and the mechanisms of jökulhlaup initiation (e.g. Björnsson,
158 1974; 1977; 1978; 1988; 1992, 1998; 2002). These works are augmented by observations and
159 analyses of specific events. The November 1996 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur following the
160 Gjálp eruption has been studied intensively (e.g. Gudmundsson et al., 1997; Björnsson, 1998;
161 Roberts et al., 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Fay, 2002; Jóhannesson, 2002; Snorrason et al., 2002;
162 Russell and Knudsen, 1999a, 1999b, 2002) and it was also part of the impetus for ‘The
163 Extremes of the Extremes: Extraordinary Floods’ symposium held in Reykjavík in July 2000.
164 There is a substantial body of work on Icelandic jökulhlaup landscape impacts, dating and the
165 sedimentology of flood deposits (e.g. Dugmore, 1987; Larsen, 2000; Maizels, 1989a, 1989b,
166 1991, 1997; Russell et al., 2001, 2005, 2006; Smith and Haraldson, 2005; Smith and Dugmore,
167 2006; Duller, 2008; 2014).

168

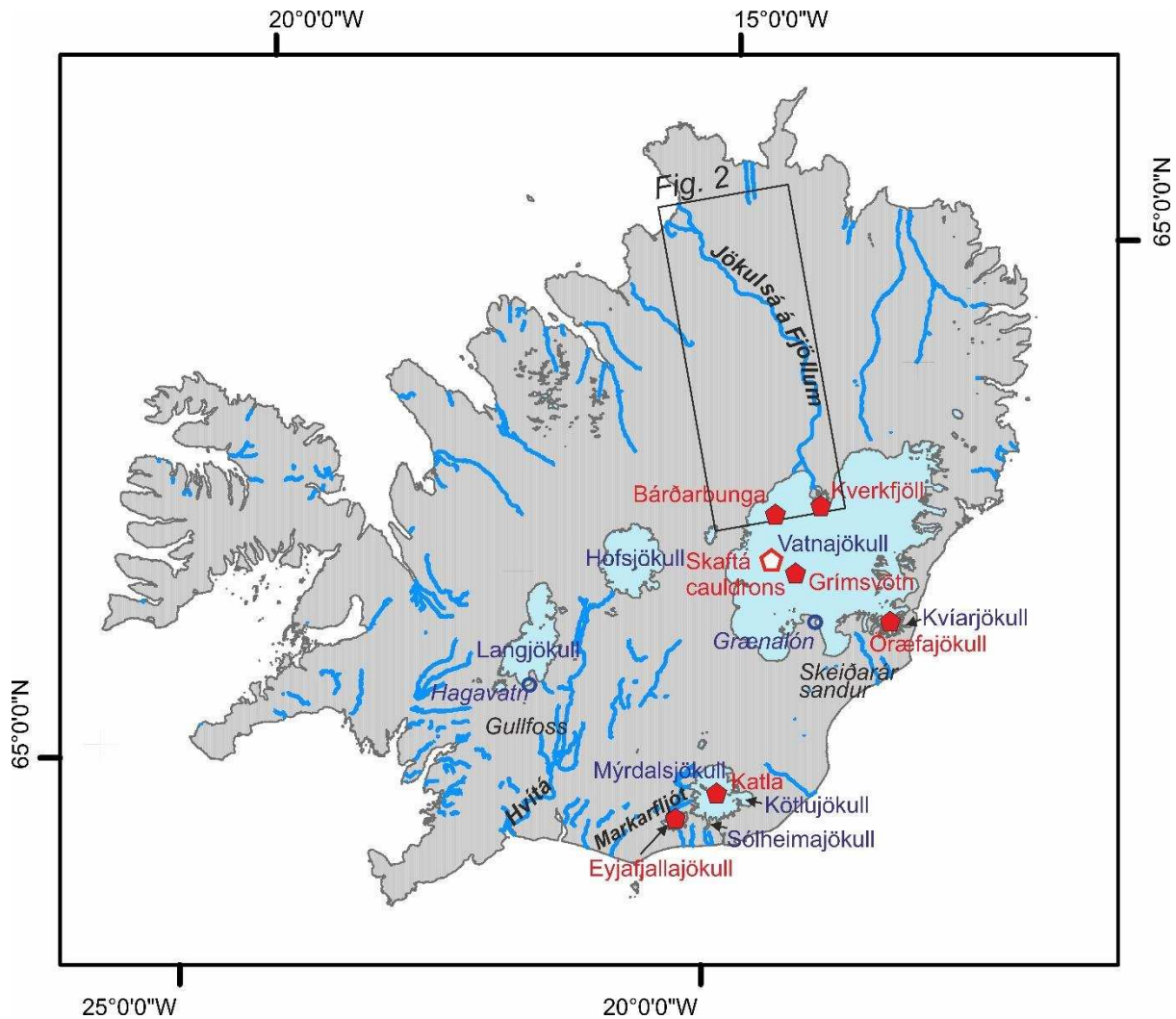
169 Icelanders have recorded glacier floods for centuries and the research literature on Icelandic
170 glacier outburst floods is extensive (Björnsson, 2010). For this reason, we summarise the key
171 contributions with respect to megaflood analogues here and direct the reader to other work for
172 further information. Tómasson (2002) identified four ‘catastrophic’ floods: i) a flood under
173 Mýrdalsjökull flowing north and west about 1700 years ago; ii) a series of jökulhlaups down
174 the Hvítá river about 9500 years ago; iii) jökulhlaups along the Jökulsá á Fjöllum from the
175 northern margin of Vatnajökull 2500 years ago, and iv) floods generated by the 1918 Katla
176 eruption. In this paper we devote more attention to the latter two events due to their impacts
177 being megaflood analogues (see [sections 3.3 and 3.4](#)) and we also identify the jökulhlaup
178 generated by the Öräfajökull eruption of 1362 as a catastrophic flood with megaflood
179 attributes.

180

181 **3.1 Ice-dammed lake drainage in Iceland**

182 Early work identified ice-dammed lakes in Iceland, their extent and their drainage history. The
183 two largest persistent ice-dammed lakes are Grænalón ([Fig. 1](#), 64° 10' N, 17° 21' W), which is
184 dammed by Skeiðararjökull, and Hagavatn (64° 29' N, 20° 17' W) dammed by Langjökull
185 (Thorarinsson, 1939; Sigbjarnasson, 1967; Bennett et al., 2000). In the early 20th century
186 Grænalón was the largest subaerial lake in the world capable of draining subglacially (Walder
187 and Costa, 1996). Jökulhlaups from Grænalón have evolved from comparatively infrequent
188 events involving almost total emptying of the lake to much smaller more frequent floods during
189 which a small fraction of the lake volume drains (Björnsson, 1976; Roberts et al, 2005). This
190 evolution has been driven by ice-water interactions and thinning of the ice dam since the
191 beginning of the 20th century, which has gradually reduced the volume of Grænalón by 75%
192 (Roberts et al., 2005). Significantly, Grænalón’s processes and mechanisms of drainage and
193 floodwater pathways have evolved as the lake has diminished in size, thereby countering the
194 general assumption that ice-marginal lakes drain by a similar set of processes each time
195 (Roberts et al., 2005). These observations may assist us in understanding both the evolution of
196 modern ice-dammed lakes and associated jökulhlaups and also the behaviour of ancient ice-
197 marginal lakes and prehistoric ‘palaeofloods’. Other smaller ice-marginal ice-dammed lakes in
198 Iceland have reduced in size with glacier recession and thinning, draining more frequently with
199 smaller floodwater volumes, thereby conforming to the ‘jökulhlaup cycle’ (Evans and Clague,
200 1994; Tweed and Russell, 1999).

201



202

203

204 **Figure 1. Sites associated with glacier outburst floods in Iceland mentioned in the text.**

205

206 The area around the Hvítá river (Fig. 1) had favourable conditions for the creation of very large
 207 lakes and extremely large floods at the end of the last glacial period about 9500 years ago. Ice-
 208 dammed lakes formed when the main glacier retreated over a topographic water divide at
 209 Kjólur damming meltwater to the south (Tómasson, 1993). The first floods drained towards
 210 the north under a glacier tongue west of Kjólur, but most drained south under a glacier at
 211 Bláfell. Evidence of the existence and drainage of ice-dammed lakes is present in the form of
 212 shorelines, some of which have been surveyed (Tómasson, 2002) and there is widespread
 213 erosional landform evidence that is analogous to that of megafloods. For example, the cutting
 214 of the stepped canyon at Gullfoss (Fig. 1) is attributed to these floods, which are estimated to
 215 have had a peak discharge of $200,000\text{m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$; the volume of the canyon at Gullfoss is $100 \times$
 216 10^6m^3 (Tómasson, 2002).

217

218 **3.2 Volcanically-generated jökulhlaups in Iceland**

219 Many floods in Iceland are triggered by subglacial volcanism and some arise from the release
220 of water from subglacial lakes that have developed because of geothermal and volcanic
221 activity. Most jökulhlaups from volcanic eruptions under Vatnajökull have drained northwards
222 to the Jökulsá á Fjöllum (Fig. 1; see section 3.3) or southwards via Skeiðarársandur (Fig. 1)
223 (e.g. Thorarinsson, 1974; Björnsson and Einarsson, 1991). The largest jökulhlaups in Iceland
224 have been generated from eruptions in the huge ice-filled calderas of Barðabunga and
225 Kverkfjöll in northern Vatnajökull (Fig. 1) (Björnsson, 1988; Björnsson and Einarsson, 1991)
226 and these floods will be discussed further below in section 3.3 because they had megaflood
227 attributes.

228

229 There have been notable and relatively frequent jökulhlaups from Grímsvötn, some of which
230 have been associated with volcanic eruptions. Grímsvötn lake is situated at 64° 25' N, 17° 19'
231 W' beneath a depression in the surface of Vatnajökull created by subglacial geothermal activity
232 which melts ice; this generates a subglacial meltwater lake that is trapped by an ice dam. The
233 depression fills with water via geothermal and volcanic activity, but then requires a separate
234 trigger (breaking of the seal on the ice dam by flotation or the opening of waterways by
235 increased localised melting, for example) to initiate flooding (e.g. Björnsson, 1974, 1992, 1998,
236 2002; 2010; Einarsson et al., 2016a). Jökulhlaups occur at four to ten-year intervals, inundating
237 Skeiðarársandur (Björnsson, 2010). The study of floods from Grímsvötn has greatly advanced
238 our knowledge of jökulhlaup processes (e.g. Thorarinsson, 1953; Björnsson, 1974, 1975, 1988,
239 1998, 2002, 2010; Jóhannesson, 2002; Roberts, 2005) and processes evident during the
240 November 1996 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur prompted re-evaluation of flood models. The
241 swift rise to peak discharge marked the event as a rapidly-rising jökulhlaup (Björnsson, 1998;
242 Roberts et al., 2000b) and the flood was characterised by hydrofracturing of ice due to high
243 subglacial water pressures and fluvial emplacement of debris within Skeiðarárjökull (Roberts
244 et al., 2000b; Roberts et al., 2003).

245

246 The Skaftá cauldrons are located at 64° 29' N, 17° 30' W (Fig. 1) over geothermal systems ~10
247 to 15 km north-west of Grímsvötn and they frequently give rise to outburst floods. The peak
248 discharge of 50-3000 m³s⁻¹ in the Skaftá river is usually reached in one to three days and floods
249 typically recede in one to two weeks (Björnsson, 1977; 1992; 2002). Like floods from
250 Grímsvötn, these jökulhlaups are triggered by flotation, of the glacier (Björnsson, 2002) and

251 many are on the rapidly rising end of the spectrum of jökulhlaups (Einarsson et al., 2016a).
252 Recent research has identified that, like other rapidly-rising floods, some of the floods in Skaftá
253 cannot be explained by Nye's (1976) jökulhlaup theory and instead the passage of a subglacial
254 pressure wave forms the initial flood path (Einarsson et al., 2016a, 2016b). This assertion
255 supports other work on rapidly rising jökulhlaups, which have been identified in Iceland and
256 elsewhere (e.g. Björnsson, 1992, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Jóhannesson, 2002; Flowers et al., 2004)
257 and our understanding of these processes has advanced significantly over the last twenty years.
258 However, the conditions that govern whether a jökulhlaup develops as a rapidly rising event or
259 more slowly, with an exponential rise to peak discharge, remain poorly understood.

260
261 Eruptions of Öräfajökull (Fig. 1, 64° 00' N, 16° 38' W) have resulted in extensive flooding
262 due to rapid ice melt. The 1362 eruption of Öräfajökull was the largest explosive eruption in
263 Europe since Vesuvius in AD79. A powerful jökulhlaup was generated, which lasted less than
264 a day, but may have had a peak discharge greater than $100,000 \text{ m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ (Thorarinsson, 1958)
265 which defines it as a catastrophic event. Less powerful floods were produced by an eruption in
266 1727, but the peak discharge of this event was still equivalent to the peak discharge of the
267 November 1996 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur (Roberts and Gudmundsson, 2015). Both
268 floods carried copious quantities of ice which took decades to melt; some of the large stranded
269 blocks were re-named as glaciers (Sigurdsson and Williams, 2008), which is testimony to their
270 prominence, and there are reports of ice reaching the sea (Roberts and Gudmundsson, 2015).
271 The flows also transported extremely large boulders; for example, the 10 m-long smjörsteinn
272 or 'butterstone' (Fig. 2A) which is believed to have been deposited by the 1362 jökulhlaup,
273 and a collection of angular boulders estimated to weigh 500 tonnes, which are embedded within
274 jökulhlaup deposits (Thorarinsson, 1958; Roberts and Gudmundsson, 2015; Everest et al.,
275 2017). The transport of these large boulders is an indication of exceptionally high flood
276 competence and the lasting nature of the evidence akin to that of a megaflood environment.
277 Examination of jökulhlaup deposits at the Kota fan, which is believed to have been formed
278 during the 1727 eruption of Öräfajökull, suggests that the flows were highly debris-charged or
279 hyperconcentrated (e.g. Maizels, 1993). Some of the landform and sedimentary evidence of the
280 1362 jökulhlaup was eradicated by the 1727 flood. The steep-sided nature of the topography
281 and the short floodwater travel-time to settled locations and infrastructure makes Öräfajökull
282 one of the most dangerous volcanoes in Iceland.

283

284 Similar floods have been produced from eruptions in Eyjafjallajökull (Fig. 1, 63° 38' N, 19°
285 37' W) in 1612 and 1821-23 and Hekla (Fig. 1, 63° 59' N, 19 ° 41' W) in 1845 and 1947
286 (Kjartansson, 1951). The most recent eruption of Eyjafjallajökull, which began on 14th April
287 2010, generated jökulhlaups in the Markarfljót river (Fig. 1). The flood sequence was
288 dominated by two large jökulhlaups on 14th and 15th April, but from 20th April to 16th May
289 2010, there were >140 discrete outburst floods with discharges ranging from 10 to 226 m³s⁻¹
290 above an elevated Markarfljót base flow of 200 to 300 m³s⁻¹ (Dunning et al., 2013). Research
291 indicates that peak discharge and peak sediment flux were de-coupled and the dominant ice-
292 proximal surface landforms were the product of a series of late stage lower discharge
293 jökulhlaups over a period of weeks (Dunning et al., 2013). This abrupt and pervasive landscape
294 impact challenges traditional ideas regarding the magnitude and frequency of landforming
295 events. It has also become evident that the time of year of an eruption may influence flood
296 timing and floodwater routing. For example, the 2010 Eyjafjallajökull eruption occurred at the
297 end of winter when the glacial drainage system was inefficient and it took five hours from start
298 of eruption for floodwater to reach the proglacial lake 5 km at the glacier margin. The 1996
299 Gjálp eruption, which generated the November 1996 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur, occurred
300 at the end of the summer when the glacier drainage system was better developed; hence a
301 journey time of ten hours to travel 50 km on a gentler slope (Einarsson et al., 1997; Sgattoni et
302 al, 2017).

303

304 The Markarfljót river canyon owes its origin to a flood from Mýrdalsjökull (Fig. 1), believed
305 to have been volcanically-induced, which flowed north and west through the Innri Emstrur
306 River area and the Markarfljót river basin and then down to the sea at Landeyjar 1700 years
307 ago (e.g. Tómasson, 2002; Smith and Dugmore, 2006). The flood is estimated to be as large as
308 the jökulhlaup generated from the 1918 eruption of Katla (see section 3.4). Researchers have
309 noted the difference in canyon erosion in móberg (subglacially-erupted hyaloclastite and tuff)
310 and basalt; the móberg section is narrow and deep, the basalt section is wide (Tómasson, 2002).

311



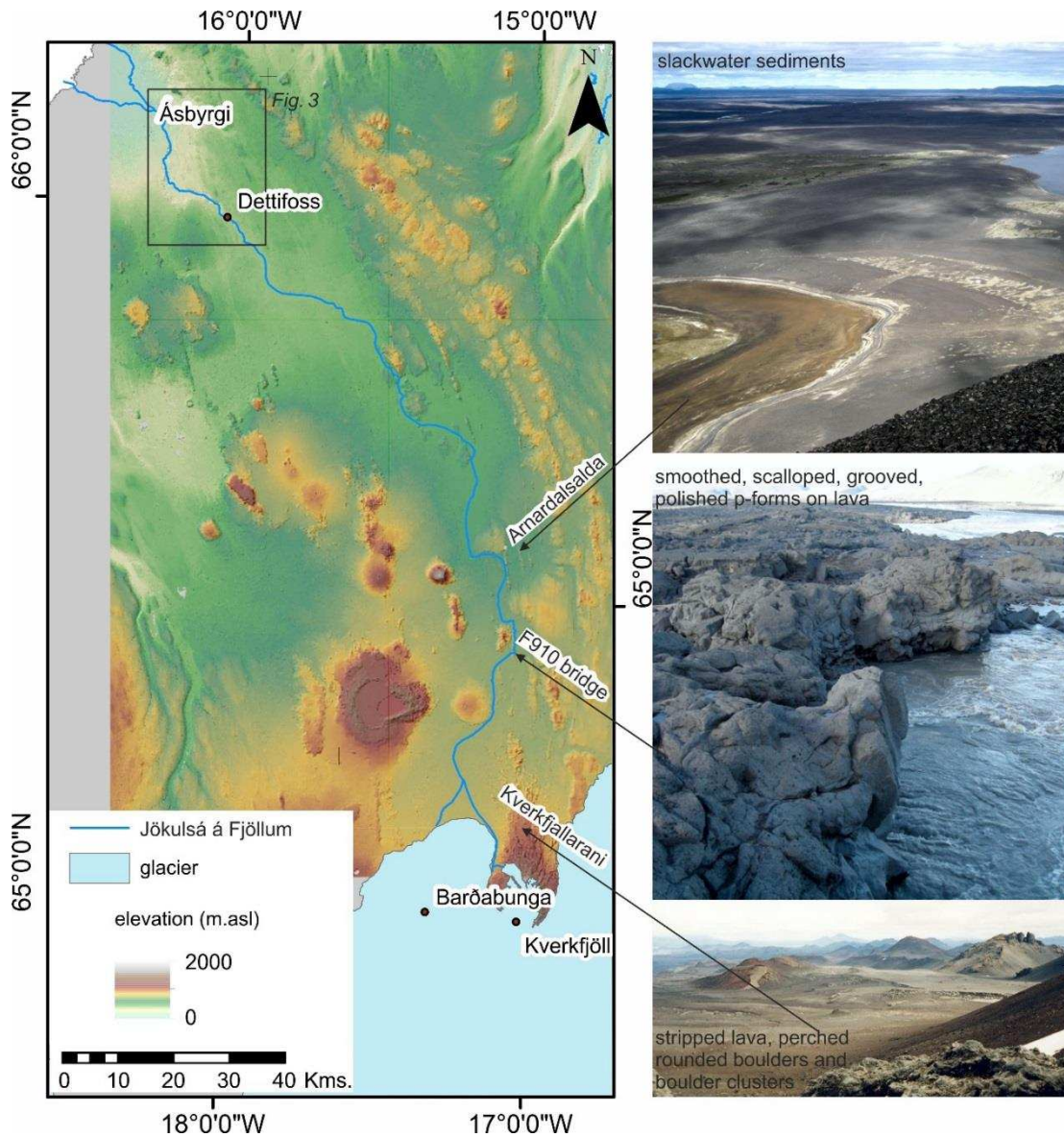
312

313 **Figure 2. Giant boulders moved by outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland; the**
 314 **smjörsteinn or butter stone believed to have been deposited by the Öraefajökull floods of**
 315 **1362 (A: image courtesy of Svava Björk Þorláksdóttir, 11th April 2017), along the**
 316 **Jökulsá á Fjöllum (B), and by Katla 1918 jökulhlaup (C: image courtesy of Hugh**
 317 **Tuffen), and In west Greenland giant boulders were moved between June 1988 and**
 318 **May 2010 in the upper Watson, most likely by the 2007 glacier outburst flood from the**
 319 **ice dammed lake on the northern margin of Russell Glacier. In panel D white circles**
 320 **indicate boulders moved and arrows indicate static boulders for reference. Note persons**
 321 **in each panel for scale. All panel D images courtesy of Andy Russell.**
 322

323 3.3 Jökulsá á Fjöllum

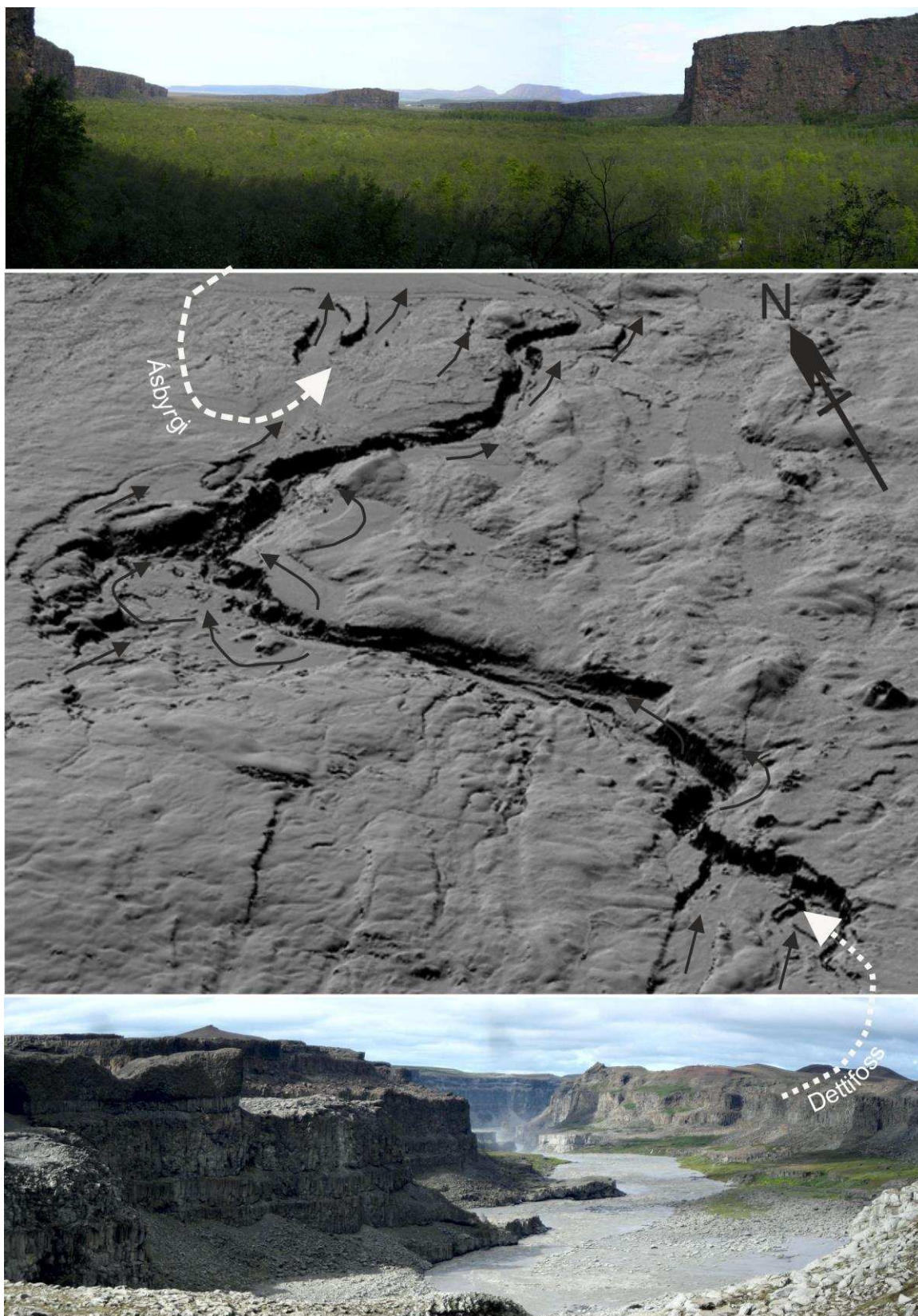
324 Many historical and early- to mid-Holocene glacier outburst floods have occurred along the
 325 Jökulsá á Fjöllum (Fig. 1, 3) in Iceland (Helgason, 1987; Thórarinnsson, 1950, 1959; Waitt,
 326 2002; Kirkbride et al., 2006; Baynes et al., 2015; see Table 2 in Carrivick et al., 2013). The
 327 earliest of these were also the largest and can be classified as megafloods by their
 328 reconstructed peak discharge, volume and landscaping impact (Waitt, 1998, 2002). Indeed it
 329 was the dry waterfalls or ‘cataracts’, plucked-bedrock ‘scablands’, bedrock flutings and
 330 plastically-sculpted or ‘p-forms’, potholes, giant boulders mobilised by the floods (Fig. 2B)
 331 and large-scale gravel bars (see both Table 1 in Carrivick et al., 2012 and Table 1 in Baynes et

332 al., 2015a) that first attracted attention during surveys for hydroelectric development
333 (Thórarinnsson, 1950, 1959; Helgason, 1987). Most profoundly, it was realised that the modern
334 Jökulsá á Fjöllum is far too small to have formed the Dettifoss canyon and the (now dry) canyon
335 system at Ásbyrgi (Fig. 4; Tómasson, 1973; Elíasson, 1977; Malin and Eppler, 1981) and
336 therefore that they must be products of very large jökulhlaups that routed ~ 150 km from
337 northern Vatnajökull (Thórarinnsson, 1950; Sæmundsson, 1973; Tómasson, 1973; Waitt, 1998,
338 2002). Megafloods generated by the Barðabunga (Fig. 1, 64° 38' N, 17° 32' W) volcanic system
339 have drained through Dyngujökull on the northern margin of Vatnajökull and hence into the
340 Jökulsá á Fjöllum (Tómasson, 2002) but there is also extensive geomorphological and
341 sedimentological evidence for the occurrence of jökulhlaups with megaflood-type impacts
342 routing into the Jökulsá á Fjöllum from the Kverkfjöll volcano (64° 36' N, 16° 44' W), which
343 has two calderas (Carrivick, 2004; Carrivick et al., 2004a, b, 2007, Carrivick and Twigg, 2005;
344 Marren et al., 2009). There is also geomorphological evidence that jökulhlaups from Kverkfjöll
345 have been intimately associated with subglacial volcanism (Carrivick et al., 2009a). Overall,
346 the geometric scale of the Dettifoss and Ásbyrgi canyons (Fig. 4) in the distal parts of the
347 Jökulsá á Fjöllum (Fig. 3), and the presence of giant boulders and gravel bars, has prompted
348 comparisons of the Jökulsá á Fjöllum floods with (i) the Columbia plateau or Missoula
349 megafloods (Tómasson, 1973, 2002; Waitt, 1998, 2002), (ii) other terrestrial megafloods
350 (Baker, 2002), and (iii) megafloods on Mars (Malin and Eppler, 1981; Baker, 2002; Lapotre et
351 al., 2016) and brought awareness to the geological importance and deglacial association of
352 jökulhlaups (c.f. Carrivick, 2011).



353
 354
 355
 356
 357

Figure 3. Route of the Jökulsá á Fjöllum through north-central Iceland from the northern margin of Vatnajökull.



358

359 **Figure 4. The 500 m wide Dettifoss canyon and the 1100 m wide Ásbyrgi canyons as**
 360 **represented in the ArcticDEM with some of the major palaeochannels as identified by**
 361 **Tómasson (2002) and Baynes et al. (2015a) indicated with black arrows. The direction**
 362 **of view of each of the photographs is indicated by the white dashed arrows.**
 363

364 Most recent research on the Jökulsá á Fjöllum floods has firstly used the geomorphological
365 (e.g. Baynes et al., 2015) and sedimentological (e.g. Knudsen and Russell, 2002) evidence of
366 the distal canyons to inform conceptual landscape evolution and palaeoflow character.
367 Secondly, that field evidence and conceptualisation has been combined to drive mechanistic
368 hydraulic models that not only consider the distal but also the proximal reaches, thereby
369 enabling a relatively sophisticated quantification of the inundation, peak discharge, behaviour
370 and likely source of the Jökulsá á Fjöllum floods (e.g. Alho et al., 2005; Carrivick, 2006,
371 2007a,b, 2009; Alho and Aaltonen, 2008). Particularly significant advances in understanding
372 of the Jökulsá á Fjöllum floods have been made when such analyses have been combined with
373 geochronological methods to give timings and rates of change; megaflood episodes at ~ 9000,
374 5000 and 2000 years ago with > 2000 m knickpoint recession associated with these individual
375 (and geologically instantaneous) events: Baynes et al. (2015b). These rates can be compared
376 with mean rates of knickpoint erosion during the Holocene of 0.7 m.a^{-1} (de Quay et al., 2019),
377 and mechanical denudation of 0.8 to $3.5 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}\text{yr}^{-1}$ (Eiriksdottir et al., 2008), for example.

378

379 **3.4 Katla**

380 Katla caldera is situated at $63^{\circ} 38' \text{ N}$, $19^{\circ} 08' \text{ W}$ (Fig. 1) and is 10 to 15 km in diameter, 600
381 to 700 m deep and covered by the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap in southern Iceland (Björnsson et al.,
382 2000). The caldera wall is breached in three places: to the south-east, the north-west and the
383 south-west; these gaps provide outflow paths for ice to feed main outlet glaciers, Kötlujökull,
384 Sólheimajökull and Entujökull and they are also potential jökulhlaup pathways (Sturkell et al.,
385 2010; Sgattoni et al., 2017). Katla has a history of explosive eruptions that rapidly generate
386 meltwater, as most eruptions are confined to the caldera area. Eruptions can break through 400
387 m of ice cover in one to two hours (Björnsson, 2002) and give rise to jökulhlaups
388 ('Katlahlaups') routed onto Mýrdalssandur. The path of each flood depends on the location of
389 the eruptive site, the geometry of Mýrdalsjökull and the hydrological pathways under the ice
390 (Björnsson et al., 2000; Larsen, 2000; Sturkell et al., 2010). Although most historic Katlahlaups
391 exited Kötlujökull, several floods are known to have inundated Sólheimasandur and
392 Skógasandur in the early 10th century (Dugmore, 1987; Dugmore et al., 2000; Larsen, 2009)
393 and some floodwater from the 1860 Katla eruption also drained through Sólheimajökull
394 (Hákonarson, 1860; Björnsson et al., 2000; Larsen, 2000). During more recent floods on
395 Mýrdalssandur, floodwaters have exited Kötlujökull (Björnsson et al., 2000; Larsen, 2000;
396 Russell et al., 2010).

397

398 The Katla volcanic system is one of the most active in Iceland; there have been at least twenty
399 eruptions within the central volcano (Larsen, 2000) and one in its fissure swarm over the last
400 1,100 years. Water-transported volcanic debris has been estimated as from 0.7 to 1.6 km³ per
401 event (Tómasson 1996; Larsen 2000) and evidence suggests that jökulhlaup peak discharge of
402 $1 - 3 \times 10^5 \text{ m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ was typically reached in a few hours with total water volumes of 1 – 8 km³
403 draining over three to five days (Thorarinsson, 1974; Tómasson, 1996; Larsen, 2000). The
404 jökulhlaups from Katla can therefore be classified as catastrophic floods. They can also be
405 recognised for having megaflood attributes; Mýrdalssandur, Sólheimasandur and Skógasandur
406 have been largely built by Katla jökulhlaups and are type-sites for Icelandic volcanogenic
407 floods and their sedimentary characteristics (e.g. Einarsson et al., 1980; Haraldsson, 1981;
408 Jónsson, 1982; Maizels and Dugmore, 1985; Maizels, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1993; Tómasson,
409 1996; Duller et al., 2008). Furthermore, marine sediments found several hundred kilometres
410 south of Iceland reportedly contain sediments from the Katla eruption site (Björnsson, 2002).
411 The intense, widespread and pervasive ‘megaflood-type’ impact of the jökulhlaups from Katla
412 is perhaps in part due to the rate of increase of discharge and peak discharges that are both an
413 order of magnitude higher than for any known jökulhlaup from a subglacial lake in Iceland
414 (Tómasson, 2002).

415
416 The last major Katla eruption was in 1918. On 12th October, an earthquake was followed by
417 30 minutes of continuous tremor marking the onset of the eruption. Floodwaters burst from
418 Kötlujökull and across Mýrdalssandur; it is reported that the leading edge of the outburst flood
419 flowed from the glacier margin to the sea in 45 minutes (Tómasson, 1996). The main flood
420 lasted 5 to 6 hrs before it began to wane; the calculated peak discharge was 300,000 m³s⁻¹,
421 which is five to six times higher than the November 1996 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur
422 (Björnsson, 2002). It is estimated that 8 km³ of water was drained, inundating 400 km² of land
423 (Tómasson, 1996). The floodwaters were sediment-rich and carried large boulders (Fig. 2C)
424 and large blocks of ice in the flow, which were deposited on the sandur (Tómasson, 1996;
425 Tómasson, 2002). The 1918 Katla jökulhlaup had high acceleration on the rising limb of 7 m³s⁻²
426 (Roberts, 2005) and mean flow velocity of 6 to 12 ms⁻¹ (Duller et al., 2008). Combined with
427 the high peak discharge, these characteristics define it as one of the largest and most powerful
428 (historic) floods ever directly observed.

429
430 There has been debate over the nature of the flow properties of the Katla floods with research
431 evaluating the sedimentary evidence for a turbulent water flow, hyperconcentrated flow or

432 debris flow (e.g. Jónsson 1982; Maizels, 1991; Tómasson, 1996; Duller et al., 2008). Given
433 that floodwater burst from the surface of Kötlujökull (Tómasson, 1996) it has been
434 hypothesised that flood sediments were emplaced in the glacier in a similar way to the
435 November 1996 jökulhlaup at Skeiðararjökull (Roberts et al., 2000a). Other more recent
436 research has concentrated on landscape impacts of the 1918 Katla jökulhlaup; Duller et al.
437 (2014) used time series analysis of historical topographic surveys over a 90-year period
438 following the flood to identify regions of persistent topography that are likely to influence flow
439 routing in future jökulhlaups and highlighted complete reorganisation of the main perennial
440 meltwater channel. They identified extremely rapid and geologically-pervasive impact; ~ 4 km
441 of coastline advance and ~ 2 km³ of sediment accumulation on Mýrdalssandur in only a few
442 hours, which are analogous to megaflood impacts.

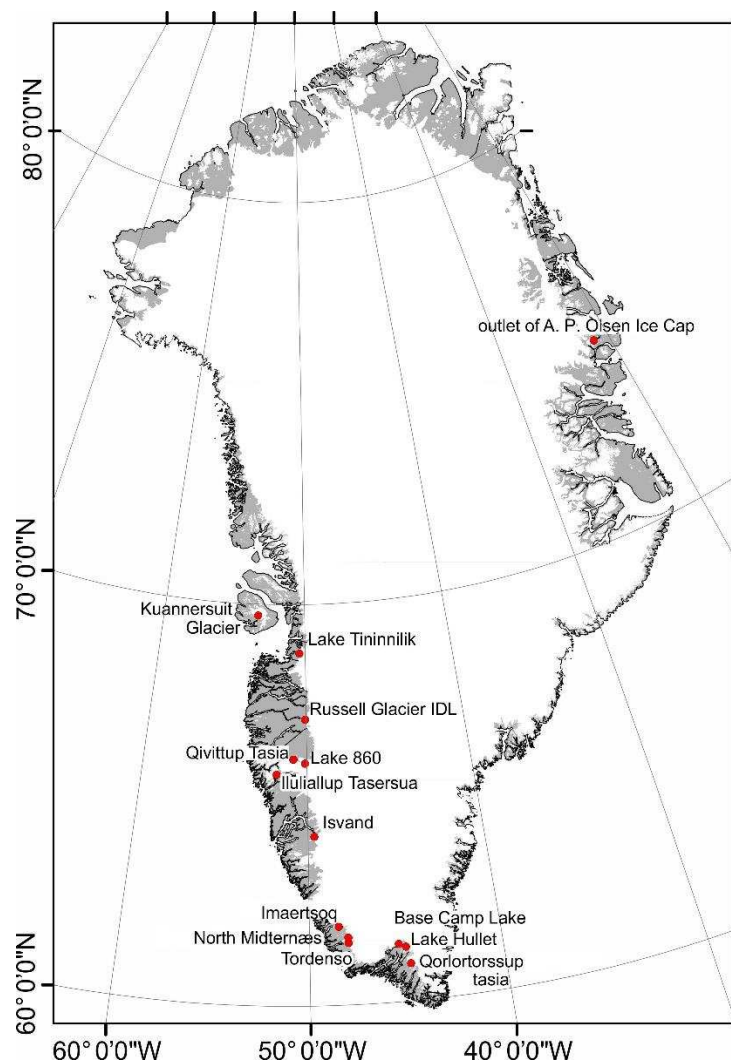
443
444 In 1955, a jökulhlaup from Katla swept away the Múlavísl bridge. The flood was associated
445 with the development of two ice cauldrons in Mýrdalsjökull, but there was no observable
446 eruption (Rist, 1967). In July 1999, a volcanically-generated jökulhlaup burst from
447 Sólheimajökull, marking the onset of a period of volcanic unrest from the Katla subglacial
448 volcano (Einarsson, 2000; Sigurdsson et al., 2000; Einarsson et al., 2005; Soosalu et al., 2006;
449 Gudmundsson et al., 2007; Sturkell et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2010). This event advanced our
450 knowledge of jökulhlaup processes in several ways. This flood, like that of the November 1996
451 jökulhlaup on Skeiðarársandur, was characterised by a rapid rise to peak discharge (Roberts et
452 al., 2000b; Roberts et al., 2003). The 1999 flood smoothed the long profile of the channel
453 system considerably (Staines et al., 2014) and the peak erosion and deposition rates have been
454 calculated to be 650 m³s⁻¹ and 595 m³s⁻¹ respectively, with deposition occurring on the rising
455 stage of the event and erosion on the falling limb (Staines and Carrivick, 2015), challenging
456 conceptual models of jökulhlaup sediment dynamics.

457

458 **4. Glacier outburst floods in Greenland**

459 A brief summary of the best-known ice-dammed lakes in West Greenland with periodic sudden
460 drainages was given in Weidick and Olesen (1980). However, with technological advances, a
461 more complete inventory of ice-dammed lakes that drain suddenly can be identified. For
462 example, using (LandSat) satellite image analysis to construct multi-temporal ice-marginal
463 lake inventories, Carrivick and Quincey (2014) found that between 1987 and 2010 15 % of
464 (total n = 823) ice-marginal lakes in west Greenland decreased in size and a further number (>
465 15 %) drained completely. Whether these were sudden or slow drainages is hard to determine

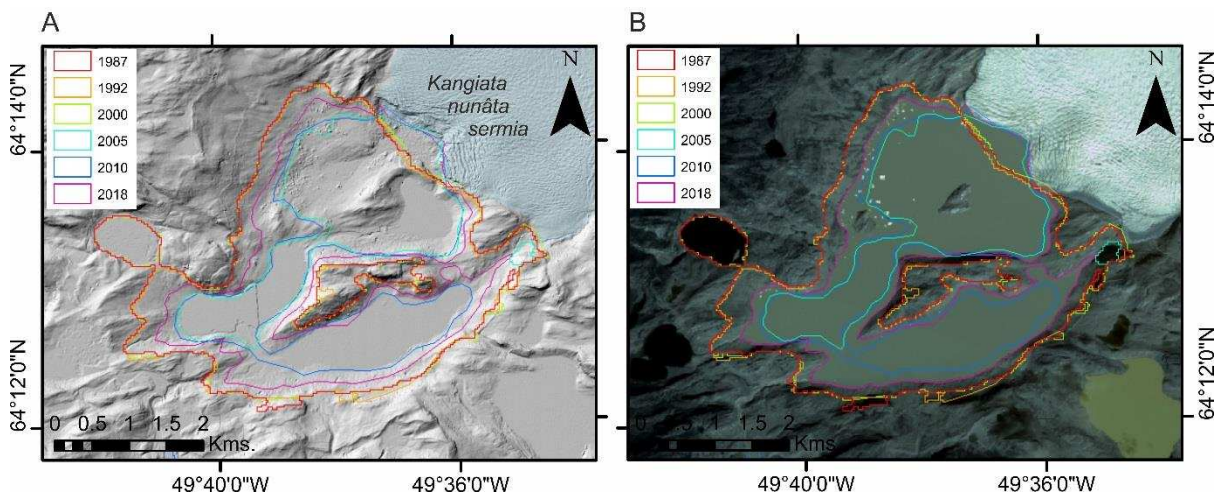
466 because the time interval between those satellite images is typically several months and in some
 467 cases several years. However, a common diagnostic signature of recent jökulhlaup events is
 468 the accumulation of huge ice blocks on the exposed lake floor and along the inundated
 469 downstream river plain. These time interval problems have been encountered by virtually all
 470 of the studies reviewed below with remote observations, but are reducing as WorldView, Planet
 471 and other satellites increase temporal coverage to just a few days, yet whilst maintaining near-
 472 complete global spatial coverage. In the section below we provide the first review of the ice-
 473 dammed lakes in Greenland that have been reported in the literature to produce glacier outburst
 474 floods (Fig. 5) and note where they have exhibited megaflood attributes.
 475



476
 477 **Figure 5. Overview of location of ice-dammed lakes that have been reported to produce**
 478 **glacier outburst floods in Greenland.**
 479

480 4.1 Isvand

481 Isvand (64° 13' N, 49° 38' W) is the earliest-described ice-dammed lake in Greenland,
 482 apparently appearing in written sources as early as the beginning of the 18th century (Weidick
 483 and Citterio, 2011) and named by Fridtjof Nansen at the culmination of his Greenland Ice Sheet
 484 (GrIS) crossing in 1888. The thinning of Kangiata Nunaata Sermia and the contemporaneous
 485 recession of the ice margin to Isvand was followed by a gradual growth of the ice-dammed lake
 486 from ~2 km² in 1888 to ~10 km² around 1960 (Fig. 6A). Satellite images (Fig. 6B) reveal that
 487 it drained in 2004 and again in 2009 (Weidick and Citterio, 2011). Those 2004 and 2009
 488 drainages caused profound landscape impacts via changes in the proglacial hydrological
 489 routing; after ~ 250 years of permanent drainage to Ameralla fjord, Isvand now drains via
 490 Kangiata Nunaata Sermia to Kangersuneq fjord, as it did in the mediaeval epoch (Weidick and
 491 Citterio, 2011). In August 2018 the water level of Isvand was above that of 2010 but still
 492 relatively low at 409 m.asl and the wetted area was 9.05 km² (Fig. 6A).



493

494 **Figure 6. Lake Isvand in west Greenland with historical lake outlines derived from**
 495 **LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and from year 2018 Planet (2017)**
 496 **imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a Planet (2017) image (B).**

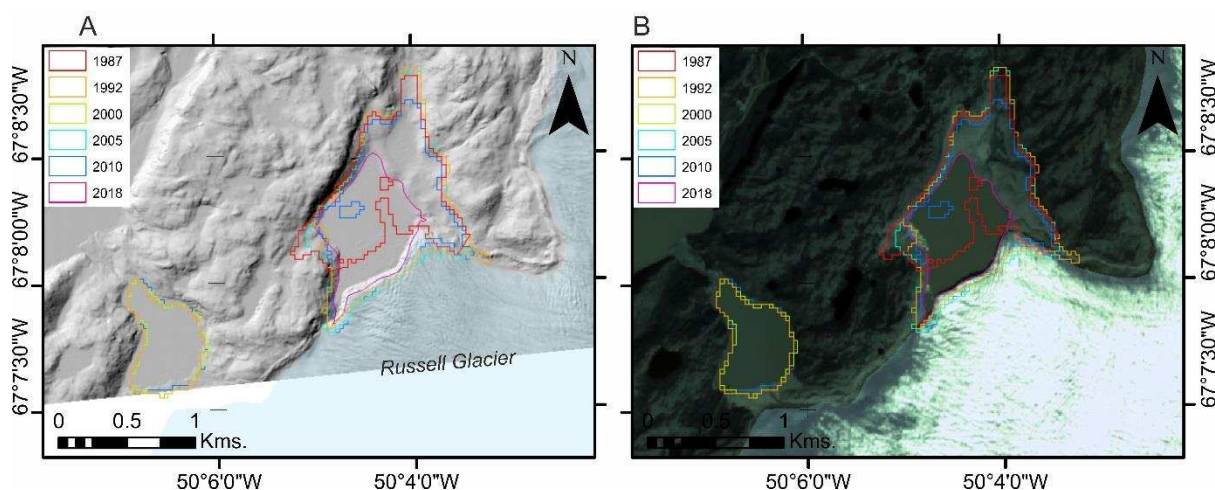
497

498 4.2 Russell Glacier

499 The most well-documented glacier outburst floods in Greenland have come from an ice-
 500 dammed lake at 67° 08' N, 50° 04' W on the northern margin of Russell Glacier (Fig. 7A) near
 501 Kangerlussuaq in west Greenland. This lake has formed repeatedly throughout the middle to
 502 late Holocene as the ice margin has advanced and retreated on a retrograde bedrock slope
 503 (Carrivick et al., 2018). There were outburst floods from this lake in 1945, 1953, 1974 (Gordan,
 504 1986), 1984 (Sugden et al., 1985) and 1987 (Russell and de Jong, 1988; Scholz et al., 1988;
 505 Russell, 1989), and potentially also in 1968 and 1983 (Sugden et al., 1985). A new cycle of

506 sudden lake drainages began in 2007 (Mernild et al., 2008; Russell et al., 2011) and continues
507 to the present. In August 2018 the water level of the ice-dammed lake on the northern margin
508 of Russell Glacier was very low at just 415 m.asl and the wetted area was 0.48 km² (Fig. 7B).
509 Lake drainage events also have been reported from two small nearby ice-dammed lakes
510 (Russell et al., 1990; Carrivick et al., 2018) but these lakes did not fill up after being drained.

511
512 The more recent floods from Russell Glacier ice dammed lake (IDL) have not only been studied
513 at source (Russell et al., 2011; Carrivick et al., 2017b; Hasholt et al., 2018) but have also noted
514 within gauged river water stage/discharge Watson River records at Kangerlussuaq (Mernild
515 and Hasholt, 2009; Rennermalm et al., 2012; Hasholt et al., 2013; Yde et al. 2014, 2016), which
516 is ~ 28 km down valley. The outburst floods affect fishing in the Kangerlussuaq fjord and
517 farther beyond to coastal regions through sudden massive fluxes of suspended sediment and
518 salinity changes (McGrath et al., 2010; Kjeldsen et al., 2014). Outburst floods from this part of
519 the GrIS have been recognised in modern erosional and depositional landforms (Cesnulevicius
520 et al., 2009; Carrivick et al., 2013), in Holocene braidplain deposits along the Watson River
521 (Storms et al., 2012) and in terrestrial glacialfluvial landforms situated far away from
522 contemporary meltwater drainage and pertaining to the mid Holocene (Carrivick et al., 2017a).
523 These glacialfluvial landforms in the Russell Glacier area could be megaflood-type landforms
524 because they are pervasive in the landscape despite having probably been formed in
525 geologically-instantaneous time. They include bedrock canyons and spillways, streamlined
526 bedrock hummocks, giant boulders mobilised by the floods (Fig. 2D), large-scale coarse gravel
527 deltas and bars, erosional river terrace edges and large-scale outwash surfaces (Russell, 2007,
528 2009; Carrivick et al., 2013; Carrivick et al., 2017a). The diagnostic evidence of outburst floods
529 in the Russell Glacier area extends to the sedimentology of the depositional landforms, which
530 most distinctively comprises large-scale gravel-cobble cross-bedding that is often capped by
531 an imbricated boulder lag (c.f. Maizels, 1997, 2002).



532

533 **Figure 7. Ice-dammed lake on the northern margin of Russell Glacier in west Greenland**
 534 **with historical lake outlines derived from LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey,**
 535 **2014) and from year 2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A)**
 536 **and a Planet (2017) image (B).**

537

538 **4.3 Kuannersuit Glacier**

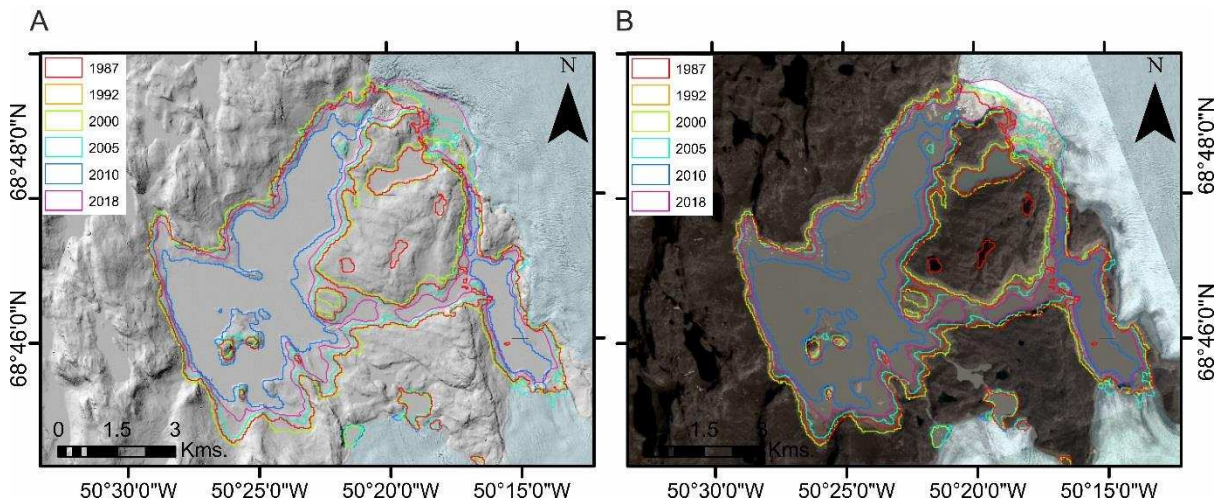
539 A 1.6 km long and 0.4 km wide ice-marginal lake formed at Kuannersuit Glacier (69°46'N,
 540 53°15'W), which is on Qeqertarsuaq (formerly Disko Island) in west Greenland, as a result of
 541 a surge between 1995 and 1998 that advanced the glacier terminus by 10.5 km (Yde et al.,
 542 2019). The lake drained between the 11th and 13th August 2006 and did not re-fill but
 543 examination of the routing of water into and beyond the glacier before and after the drainage
 544 suggests that the outburst flood fundamentally changed the subglacial hydrological network
 545 (Yde et al., 2019). The most impressive landform produced by the outburst flood and
 546 exacerbated by the re-routed subglacial water was an ice-walled canyon through the
 547 Kuannersuit Glacier terminus (Yde et al., 2019) that is reminiscent of the ice-walled canyon
 548 produced in the 1996 Skeiðarárjökull outburst flood in Iceland (Russell et al., 2001; Burke et
 549 al., 2008). The surge produced a distinctive sedimentary signal in Kangerdluk (Disko Fjord)
 550 on Disko Island comprising diurnal laminations in fine-grained deposits and thin beds of sandy
 551 turbidites originating from slope failures on a delta front (Gilbert et al., 2002) but there has
 552 been no assessment of the sedimentological impact of the outburst flood.

553

554 **4.4 Lake Tininnilik**

555 Sudden ice-dammed lake drainage and glacier outburst floods have been reported from Lake
 556 Tininnilik (formerly known as Tiningilik) which is situated at 68° 46' N, 50° 25' W (Fig. 8A)
 557 for five occasions at ~ 10-year intervals between 1945 and 1985 (Braithwaite and Thomsen,
 558 1984). Lake Tininnilik also outburst in 1993 and 2003 (Furuya and Wahr, 2005) and again in

559 2010 (Kelley et al., 2012). Braithwaite and Thomsen (1984) inferred a drainage time constant
 560 of 0.24 years and filling rates that varied by only about 10 % from one year to another. Furuya
 561 and Wahr (2005) found the total water volume lost during the 1993 jökulhlaup was $\sim 2.3 \text{ km}^3$.
 562 That volume is $\sim 2/3$ of the 1996 Grímsvötn outburst in Iceland (Gudmundsson et al., 1997)
 563 and $\sim 1/4$ of the volume of the flood generated by the 1918 eruption Katla in Iceland
 564 (Thorarinsson, 1974; Tómasson, 1996; Larsen, 2000), but we do not know over what time-
 565 frame the drainage lasted, so a peak discharge has never been proposed for floods from Lake
 566 Tininnilik. In August 2018 the level of Lake Tininnilik was above that in 2010, but still low at
 567 207 m.asl and the wetted area was 28.94 km^2 (Fig. 8B).



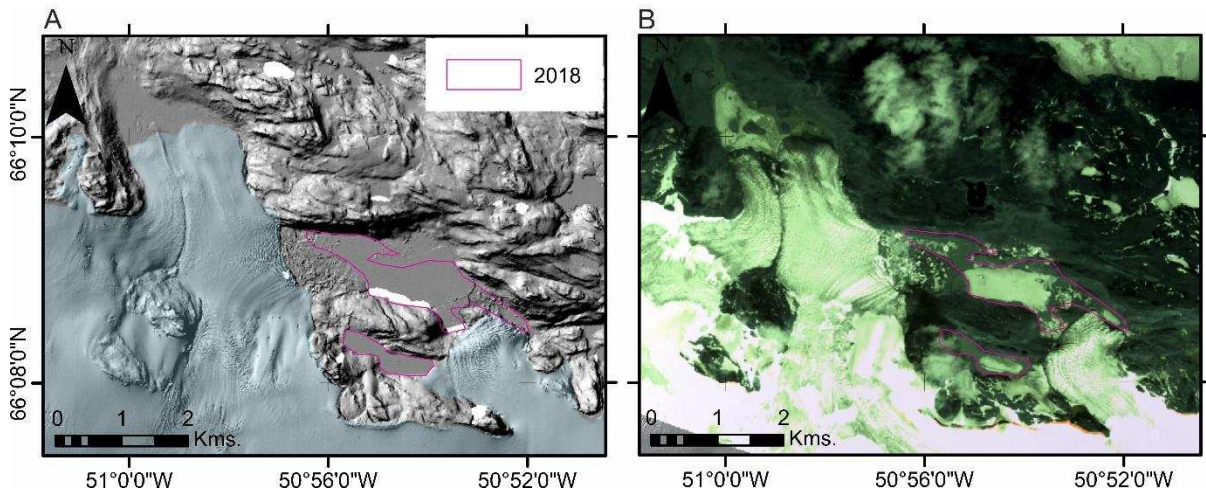
568

569 **Figure 8. Lake Tininnilik in west Greenland with historical lake outlines derived from**
 570 **LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and from year 2018 Planet (2017)**
 571 **imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a Planet (2017) image (B).**

572

573 4.5 Unnamed lakes near the Amitsuloq Ice Cap

574 Qivittup Tasia (unofficial name) is a $\sim 6 \text{ km}^2$ lake situated at $66^{\circ}09'N$, $50^{\circ}54'W$ in west
 575 Greenland. It produced a jökulhlaup in August 2008 (Yde, 2011). Google Earth images indicate
 576 that it was full on 9th October 2009, drained on 22nd June 2011 and full on 11th July 2012. It
 577 appears partially drained in the ArcticDEM with a water level at 840 m.asl (Fig. 9A). No
 578 impacts of floods from Qivittup Tasia have ever been reported.

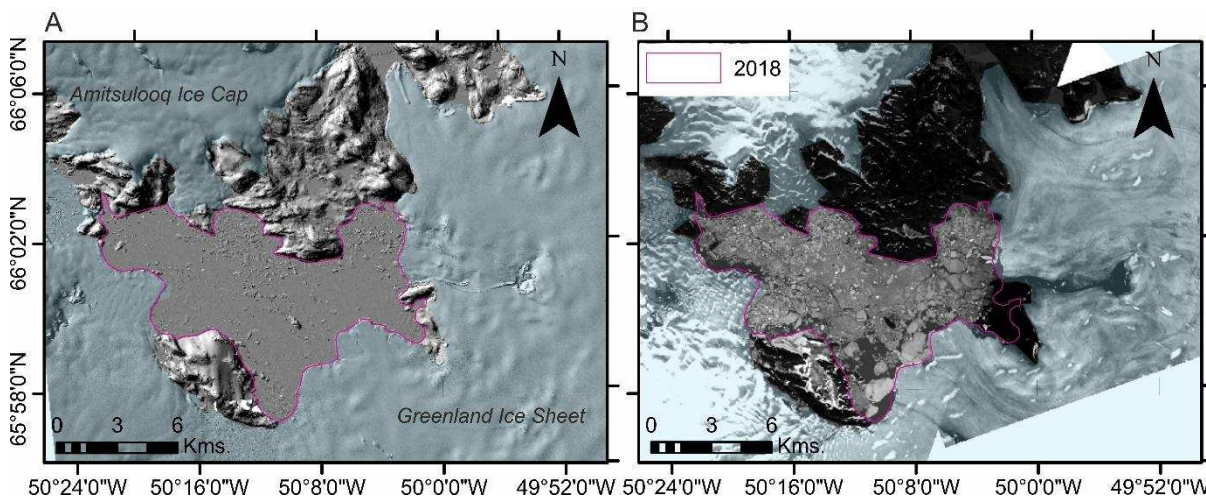


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580

581 **Figure 9. Qivittup Tasia (unofficial name) in west Greenland with lake outline for August**
582 **2018 derived from Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a**
583 **Planet (2017) image (B).**

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Lake 860 (unofficial name by Olsen, 1986) at 66°00'N, 50°13'W just south of Amitsuloq Ice Cap and bordered by the Greenland Ice Sheet and Tasersiap Sermia (also known as Qaarajuttoq Ice Cap) (Fig. 10A) was reported by Olesen (1986) to have partially drained between 17th and 23rd August 1985. In 2018 it appeared full with a surface area of 85 km² (Fig. 10B). No impacts of floods from Lake 680 have ever been reported.



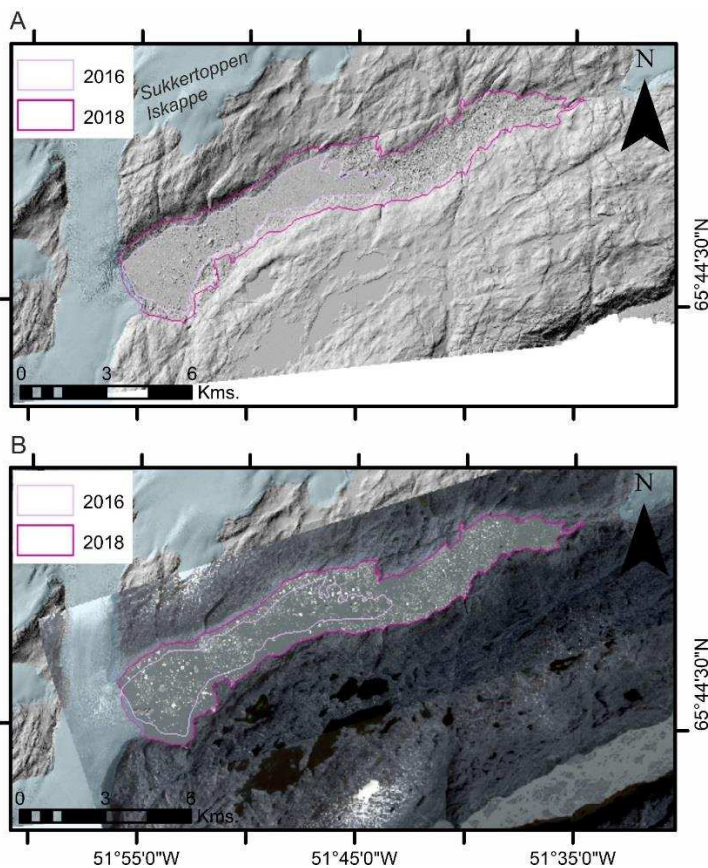
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592 **Figure 10. Lake 860 (unofficial name by Olsen, 1986) in west Greenland with lake outline**
593 **for August 2018 derived from Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic**
594 **(A) and a Planet (2017) image (B).**

597 4.6 Iluliallup Tasersua

598 Iluliallup Tasersua (previously known as Iluliagdlop Tasia) (Fig. 11A) is an ice-dammed lake
 599 situated at 65°45' N, 51°45' W that was first photographed in 1936 and repeated photographs
 600 since then and correspondence with people in Sukkertoppen, which is SW and 75 km away,
 601 has shown that the lake empties suddenly every five to seven years (Helk, 1966). When full,
 602 the lake has an area of 51 km² and when empty an area of 21 km² and the difference in the
 603 height of the water is ~ 180 m giving volume losses of ~ 6.4 km³ (Helk, 1966). That flood
 604 volume is comparable to the size of jökulhlaups in Iceland that produce megaflood-type
 605 impacts, but in contrast this is an ice-dammed lake outburst and not a volcanogenic flood. As
 606 with Lake Tininnilik, a peak discharge of outburst floods from Iluliallup Tasersua has never
 607 been proposed. The Iluliallup Tasersua floods route across valley-head sandar plains and into
 608 the fjord, so no distinctive flood impacts can be discerned in the terrestrial realm.

609



610

611 **Figure 11. Iluliagdlop tasia in west Greenland with lake outlines derived from the**
 612 **ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and an August 2018 Planet (2017) image (B).**

613

614 Iluliallup Tasersua was not considered by Carrivick and Quincey (2014) because it is not on
 615 the margin of the GrIS. However, it is evident in recent high-resolution data (Fig. 11B) that it

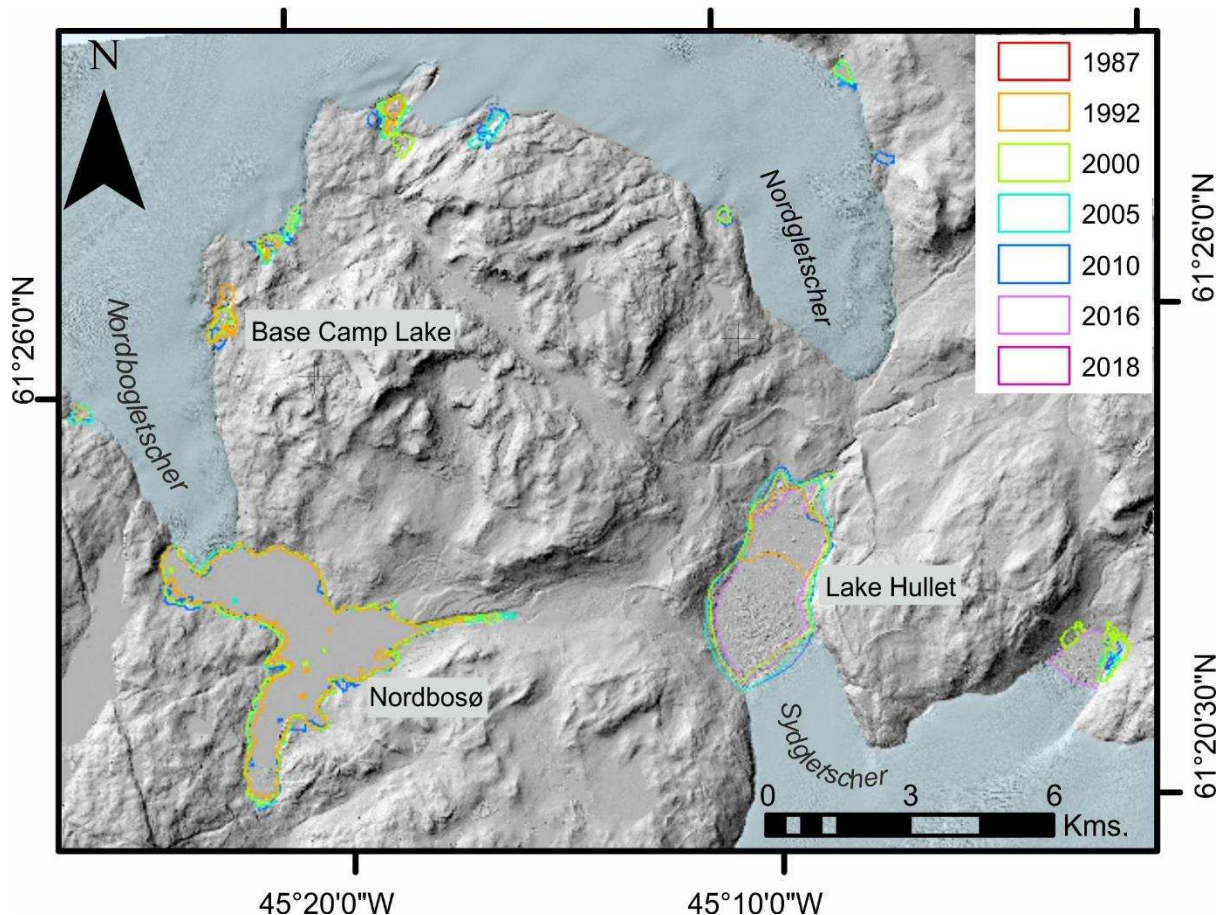
616 (i) recently drained in 2016 to an area of 14.03 km² (ii) had refilled to a total area of 32.99 km²
617 by August 2018 (Fig. 11A) and (iii) thus in just a few years had ~ 100 m gain in water surface
618 elevation and thus ~ 2 km³ gain in volume.

619

620 **4.7 Ice-dammed lakes in Johan Dahl Land**

621 Base Camp Lake (unofficial name) is an ice-dammed lake at 61° 26' N, 45° 20' W on the
622 eastern margin of Nordbogletscher, Johan Dahl Land, south Greenland (Fig. 12). In 1984
623 Clement (1984) reported that it drained annually by a submarginal stream to the proglacial lake
624 Nordbosø and that the maximum water level and timing of that was virtually the same each
625 year over a five-year time period. Nordbosø and Lake Hullet (Fig. 12) were linked during the
626 mid-Holocene as indicated by palaeo-shorelines and moraines (Weidick, 1963; Dawson, 1983).
627 Clement (1984) noted that Base Camp Lake did not appear to leak during filling and this was
628 also found to be the case at Russell Glacier by Carrivick et al. (2017b). However, a key
629 difference between the drainages of Base Camp Lake and those at Russell Glacier is that at
630 Base Camp Lake the tapping level, i.e. the water level immediately after drainage, changes
631 each year, whereas at Russell Glacier the tapping level is constant and it is the maximum water
632 level that varies (Carrivick et al., 2017). Furthermore, and unusually amongst Greenland ice-
633 dammed lakes, the drainage of Base Camp Lake is slow at ~ 2 months, because water initially
634 breaks through the ice and overflows a threshold eventually eroding its way into and under the
635 ice to become thereafter entirely submarginal or englacial (Clement, 1984). Exceptionally large
636 drainages, as recorded by extremely low water levels and water level reductions of ~ 64 m
637 occurred in 1953 and 1980 (Clement, 1984). At maximum water level the volume of Base
638 Camp Lake is 12.8 million m³ and the area is 0.8 km³.

639



640

45°20'0"W

45°10'0"W

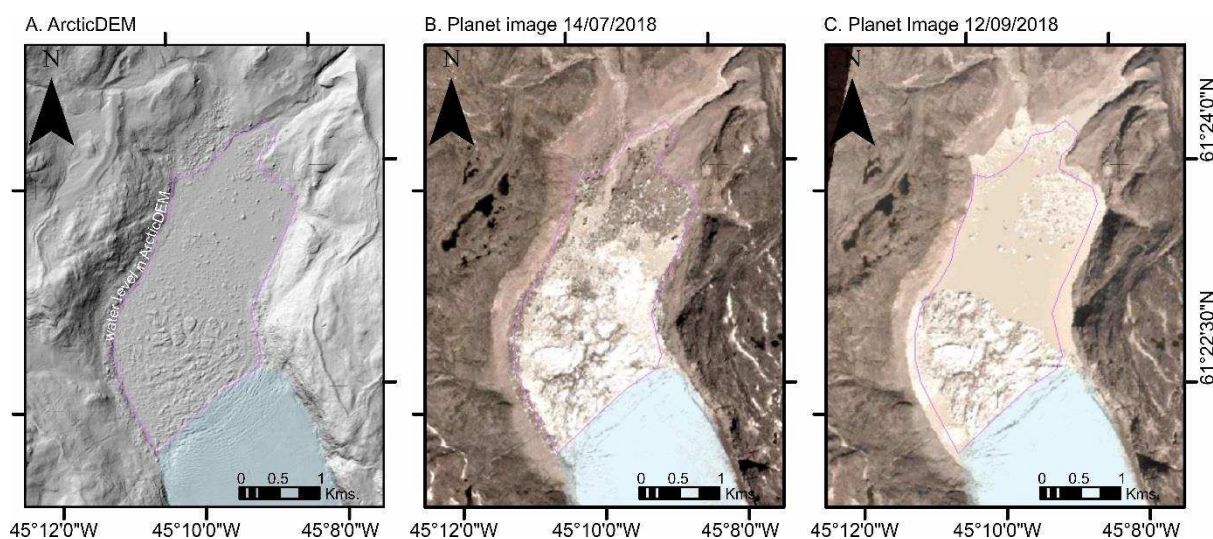
641 **Figure 12. Lake Hullet, Nordbosø and Base Camp Lake Lake Isvand in Johan Dahl**
 642 **Land, south Greenland with historical lake outlines derived from Landsat images (see**
 643 **Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and from year 2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on**
 644 **the ArcticDEM mosaic.**

645

646 Lake Hullet situated at 61° 21' N, 45° 10' W and 28 km NE of Narssarssuaq in Johan Dahl Land
 647 (Fig. 12) is one of the biggest ice-dammed lakes in south Greenland (Weidick, 1963). It drains
 648 primarily through Sydgletscher, which is unusual for flowing up-valley, i.e. with a retrograde
 649 bed slope, but also through the Kiagtût Sermiat glacier with a total subglacial tunnel length of
 650 ~ 23 km (Dawson, 1983). Information about its sudden outbursts are available back to 1957
 651 (see citations in Clement, 1983). At least ten outbursts have been reported, each occurring at
 652 the end of a summer season or in the autumn with an interval of ~ 2 years (Clement, 1983a, b).
 653 The Lake Hullet water level decreases in each sudden drainage by ~ 110 m and given that the
 654 lake has an area 6.5 km² then the volume drained is typically ~ 600 x 10⁶ m³. The 1981 outburst
 655 had a peak discharge of ~ 200 m³s⁻¹ and a volume of 235 x 10⁶ m³ (Dawson, 1983). The largest
 656 outburst has been reconstructed from palaeo-shorelines to be 950 x 10⁶ m³ and was sufficient
 657 to cause pervasive landscape impact analogous to megaflood-type impacts via localised
 658 neotectonic crustal deformation; specifically faulting and displacement of shorelines, as well

659 as rapid deglaciation of the Rundesø glacier outlet lobe (Dawson, 1983). The Lake Hullet
 660 outbursts temporarily disrupt proglacial drainage, especially due to sudden and widespread and
 661 intense deposition of ice blocks. The floods inundate the river plain at Narssarssuaq and the
 662 enormous amount of fresh water affects the hydrographic system of the Tunugdliarfik fjord. In
 663 2018 Lake Hullet was refilling from a water level elevation of 500 m.asl and from a minimum
 664 surface area of 5.2 km² (Fig. 13).

665



666

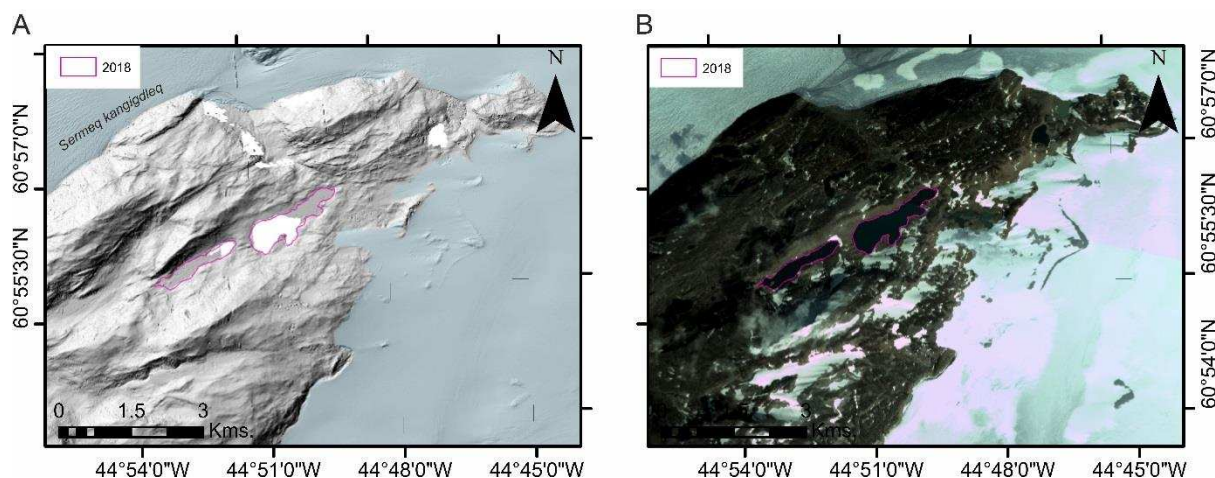
667 **Figure 13. Lake Hullet with a water level at ~ 500 m.asl (A) and with steadily increasing**
 668 **water level throughout the summer of 2018 (B, C).**

669

670 4.8 Qorlortorssup Tasia

671 Qorlortorssup Tasia (Fig. 14A) situated at 60° 55' N, 44° 51' W in south Greenland is fed by
 672 an ice-marginal lake within a basin that is empty of glacier ice. Mayer and Schuler (2005)
 673 report that this lake was impounded by an ice dam in 2005. This setting is similar to that at
 674 Russell Glacier and indeed so is the drainage event trigger: as the ice dam at Qorlortorssup
 675 Tasia thins it permits water to escape beneath it (Mayer and Schuler, 2005). The lake area
 676 increased from about 1.7 km² in 1942 to 2.25 km² in 1985 and during the same time the front
 677 of the dam retreated ~ 1 km, followed by a further retreat of 600 m between 1985 and 2003
 678 (Mayer and Schuler, 2005). The final maximum extent of the lake in 2003 was 2.9 km² and ~
 679 55 x 10⁶m³ of water drained during an eight to ten-day period (Mayer and Schuler, 2005).
 680 Mayer and Schuler (2005) noted that the 2003 outburst re-routed subglacial(?) water and that
 681 flow became at least an order of magnitude greater than before the lake drainage. In Carrivick
 682 and Quincey's (2014) analysis the lake was not detected as being ice-marginal (Fig. 14B) but
 683 in the analysis of this paper it can be shown that in August of 2018 the lake was not ice-dammed

684 and the lake level was low at 1040 m.asl and with an area of just 1.25 km² (Fig. 14A). There
 685 has never been an analysis of the impacts of floods from Qorlortorsup Tasia.

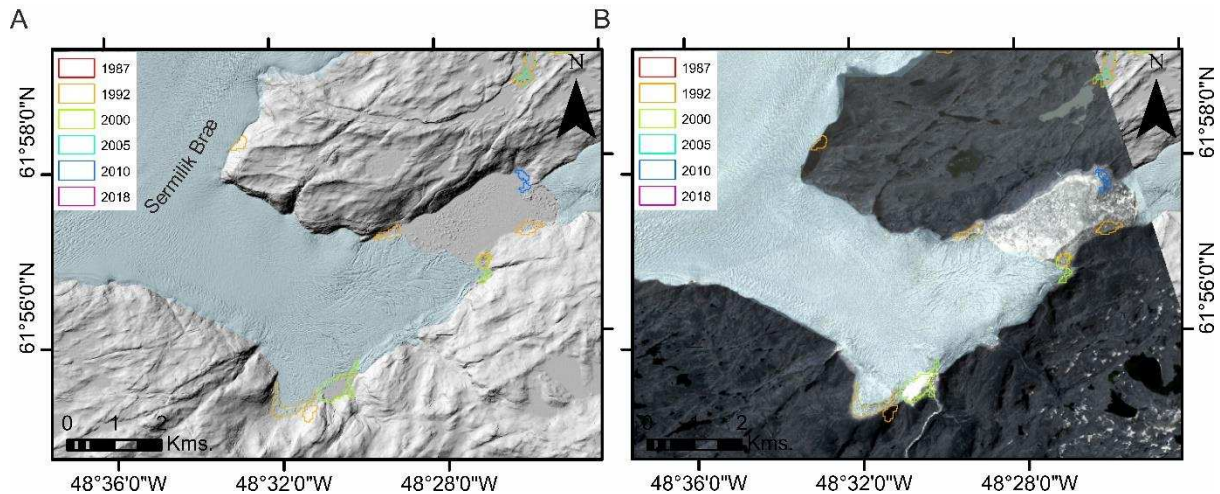


686
 687 **Figure 14. Qorlortorsup Tasia in south Greenland with lake outline derived from year**
 688 **2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a Planet (2017)**
 689 **image (B).**

691 4.9 Ice-dammed lakes in Frederikshåb region

692 The ice-dammed lakes of Imaersartoq at 61° 57' N, 48° 28' W (Fig. 15A), Tordensø at 61° 33'
 693 N, 47° 56' W (Fig. 15A) and a temporary lake in the North Midternæs (61° 41' N, 47° 59' W)
 694 (Fig. 13A), part of Frederikshåb region of south Greenland, were all described by Higgins
 695 (1970). These three lakes empty periodically by subglacial drainage in the Frederikshab
 696 district, south-west Greenland. No landscaping impacts have been described for the floods from
 697 these lakes.

698
 699 Drainages of Imaersartoq 'A' (Fig. 15B) which when full is 4.7 km², and of another 2 km² lake
 700 nearby and connected to it informally named as 'Imaersartoq B' (Higgins, 1970) have long
 701 been recognised to discharge ice bergs down valley into Sermilik fjord past the settlement of
 702 Narssalik (Fabricius, 1788; Rink, 1862, both cited in Higgins, 1970). The difference between
 703 high and low water levels in both lakes is about 50 m yielding drainage volumes of at least ~
 704 285 x 10⁶ m³ of water not accounting for water beneath the floating glacier termini (Higgins,
 705 1970). Imaersartoq appeared to drain annually and usually in late August between 1942 and
 706 1968 (Higgins, 1970).

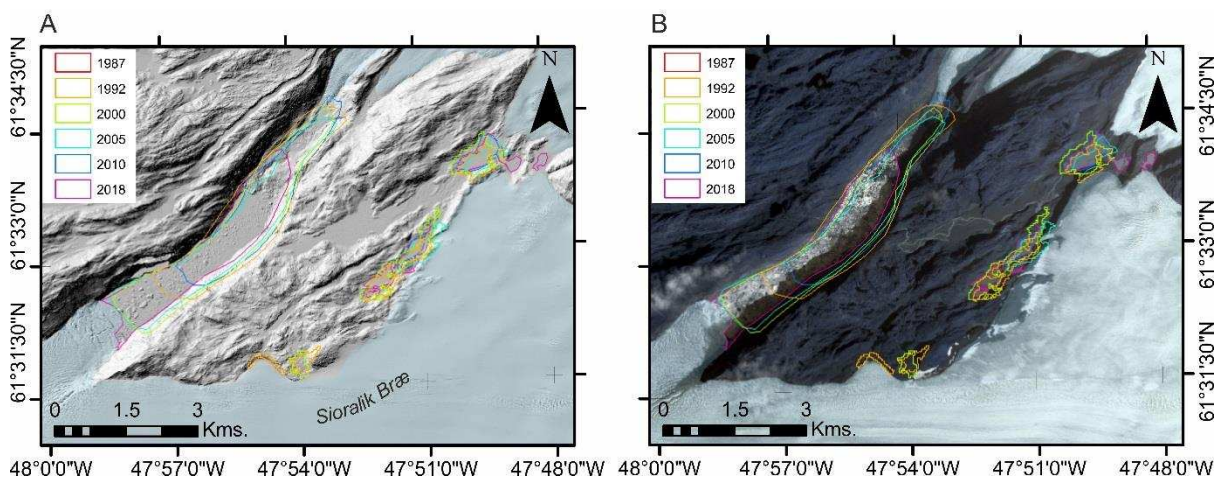


707

708 **Figure 15. Imaersartoq in the Frederikshåb region of south Greenland with historical**
 709 **lake outlines derived from LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and from**
 710 **year 2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a Planet**
 711 **(2017) image (B).**

712

713 Tordensø is situated about 15 km east of the front of Sioralik Bræ (Fig. 16A) between the
 714 mainland of Midternæs and a large nunatak. Glaciers dam the lake at the east and west ends, in
 715 a situation comparable with Imaersartoq. The surface area of Tordensø at highest water levels
 716 is about 4.8 km², the maximum difference in water levels is ~ 160 m and so the volume of
 717 water released when Tordensø drains is of the order of 605 x 10⁶ m³, excluding water
 718 supporting the floating part of the west glacier at high water levels (Higgins, 1970). Tordensø
 719 probably emptied regularly, between 1942 and 1967 but at intervals of ~ 2 years (Higgins,
 720 1970). In August 2018 the water level of Tordensø was at 360 m.asl and with an area of 3.74
 721 km² (Fig. 16B).

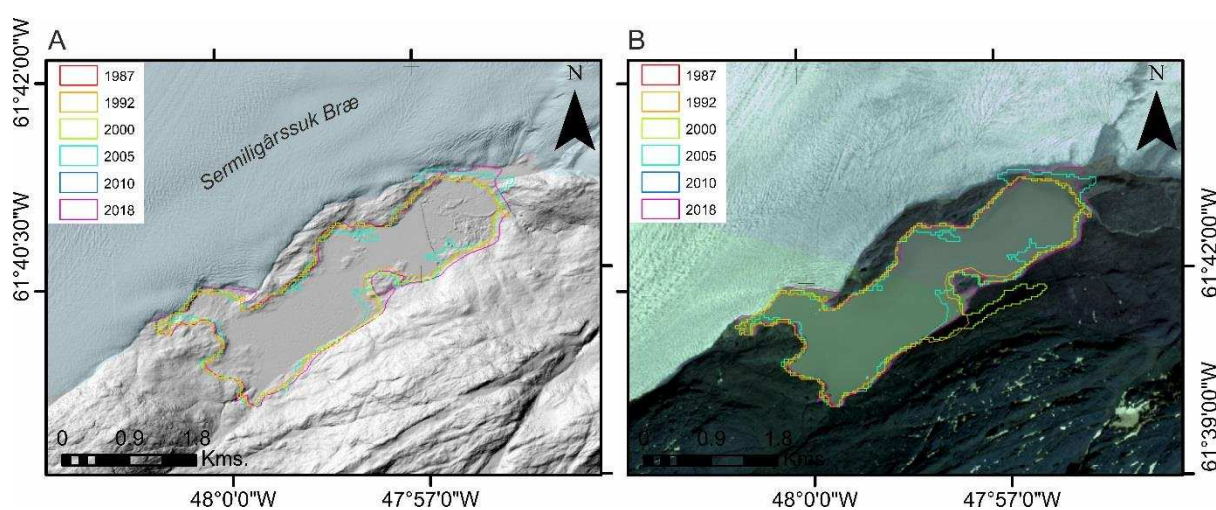


722

723 **Figure 16. Tordensø in the Frederikshåb region of south Greenland with historical**
 724 **lake outlines derived from LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and from**
 725 **year 2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a Planet**
 726 **image (B).**

727 North Midternæs temporary lake (Fig. 17A) is situated ~ 20 km north-east of the front of
 728 Sermiligårssuk Bræ and has many lacustrine terraces surrounding it. These terraces could either
 729 mean that i) the critical water level for sudden lake drainage varies from year to year, or ii) the
 730 higher terraces were formed when the glacier front was differently configured or the glacier
 731 dam was higher/thicker (Higgins, 1970). The glacier dam is < 70 m high and in August 2018
 732 the water level was very high at 499 m.asl. and was impounding up to 4.99 km² of lake water
 733 (Fig. 17B). Therefore the volume of water released during sudden drainage is ~ 70 x 10⁶ m³
 734 and drainages occurred ~ annually between 1942 and 1967, typically in late July (Higgins,
 735 1970).

736



737

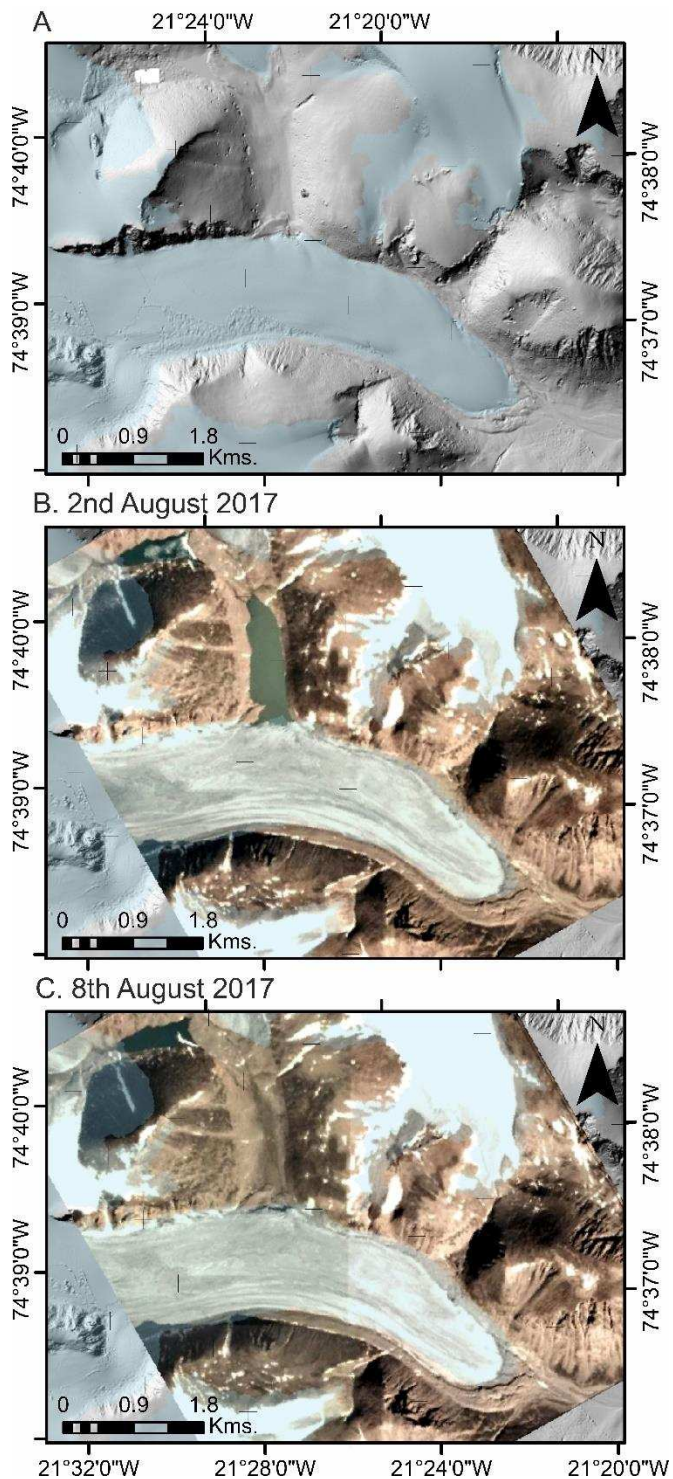
738 **Figure 17. North Midternæs in the Frederikshåb region of south Greenland with**
 739 **historical lake outlines derived from LandSat images (see Carrivick and Quincey, 2014)**
 740 **and from year 2018 Planet (2017) imagery, overlaid on the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and a**
 741 **Planet (2017) image (B).**

742

743 4.10 A. P. Olsen Ice Cap

744 The only sudden lake drainages and consequent glacier outburst floods reported from locations
 745 other than west and south Greenland are those of an ice-dammed lake that is situated at 21° 23'
 746 W on the margin of an outlet glacier of the A. P. Olsen Ice Cap in north-east Greenland (Fig.
 747 18A). Floods from this ice-dammed lake route 38 km along Store-Sødal and past Zackenberg
 748 research station, where there is a hydrological gauging station that has enabled their detection.
 749 The first known glacial lake outburst was in 2005 and since then floods have been virtually
 750 annual, with durations of just one to two days (APRI, 2018). The lake drained completely
 751 between 4th and 8th August 2017 from an area of 0.64 km² (Fig. 18B, C) but from Planet (2017)
 752 imagery there is no indication that it drained in 2018. The approximate volume of the outbursts
 753 is 5 to 10 x 10⁶ m³ (APRI, 2018) and that is sufficient to strongly influence suspended sediment,

754 mineral and nutrient exports from the catchment (Hasholt and Hagedorn, 2000; Hasholt et al.,
 755 2008; Søndergaard et al., 2015).
 756



757
 758 **Figure 18. Ice-dammed lake on the eastern margin of an outlet glacier of the A. P. Olsen**
 759 **Ice Cap in north east Greenland as represented in the ArcticDEM mosaic (A) and as**
 760 **seen to have drained completely in August 2017 in Planet (2017) images (B, C).**
 761

762 **5. The geological record of outburst floods from Iceland and Greenland**

763 Given that glacier outburst floods are common in Iceland and Greenland, it stands to reason
764 that they were also common in the past. However, there are two issues to identifying and
765 understanding the geological record of outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland and these
766 issues are no different to analyses of outburst floods and megafloods worldwide. Firstly, despite
767 the sudden onset, high-magnitude nature of these flows both in terms of peak discharge and
768 volume, the creation of diagnostic landforms and the subsequent preservation of those
769 landforms is not necessarily guaranteed (Marren, 2005; Carrivick and Rushmer, 2006, 2009).
770 For example, in terrestrial settings landforms can be created and destroyed within a single
771 outburst flood, destroyed or subdued by successive floods or buried by sedimentation under
772 normal flow conditions. Secondly, eventual detection of outburst flood landforms and
773 sediments requires a variety of data, a coordinated research effort and expertise to piece
774 together what will inevitably be a disparate and partly ambiguous set of landform and
775 sedimentary evidence. Nonetheless, with care compelling models of the landscape impact of
776 discrete extreme outburst floods events can be reconstructed (e.g. Lamb et al., 2014; Baynes et
777 al., 2015b).

778
779 In Iceland the geological record of megafloods is limited to terrestrial settings in which the
780 flood source was far from the coastline and in which contemporary environmental processes
781 have been insufficient to remove or obscure that impact. The distal parts of the Jökulsá á
782 Fjöllum, especially the Ásbyrgi and Dettifoss canyons ([section 3.3](#)), are perhaps the best
783 examples but also the Gullfoss waterfall and the Hvítá canyon ([section 3.1](#)) have been attributed
784 to sudden drainage of an extremely large proglacial lake. In contrast, there is widespread
785 recognition of vast areas of outwash gravels deposited from high-energy outburst floods
786 becoming hyperpycnal flows as they enter the ocean, especially off the south coast of Iceland,
787 from both modern and ancient outburst floods (e.g. Lacasse et al., 1998; Carey et al., 2000;
788 Geirsdóttir et al., 2000; Jennings et al., 2000; Maria et al., 2000; Mulder et al., 2003; Mulder
789 and Chapron, 2011; Van Vliet-Lanoë et al., 2017).

790
791 In Greenland the situation of preserved megaflood impacts is similar to that in Iceland, whereby
792 the majority of outburst floods discharge immediately onto valley-confined sandar or into
793 fjords. Therefore even the very largest outburst floods leave very little diagnostic terrestrial
794 landform and sedimentary evidence, but can be recognised in estuarine or fjord-head deltas
795 (e.g. Storms et al., 2012). Where land-terminating parts of the Greenland Ice Sheet or

796 Greenland's peripheral glaciers and ice caps are far from the coastline, then evidence of past
797 (Holocene) outburst floods has been recognised as bedrock canyons, streamlined hillocks,
798 perched deltas and inactive outwash plains that are situated far from contemporary surface
799 drainage routes (Carrivick et al., 2016). Additionally, in rare cases a suite of evidence can be
800 brought together to unequivocally identify outburst floods in the Quaternary geological record
801 in Greenland; Dam (2002) has shown that two valleys in the Nuussuaq Basin, west Greenland,
802 were incised along normal faults and infilled by up to 120 m thick deposits of large-scale, low-
803 angle, cross-bedded pebbly sandstones and conglomerates. These deposits have a
804 sedimentology indicating rapid deposition from outburst flood(s) characterised by high
805 concentrations of suspended coarse-grained sediment load (Dam, 2002). Dam also argued for
806 a rapid decrease in that outburst flow and the establishment of a lacustrine environment within
807 the valley(s). Dam (2002) reports that these deposits in west Greenland correspond to
808 megaflood deposits described elsewhere by Baker (1973) and Carling (1996), for example, for
809 glacier outburst floods in valley-confined settings and he asserts that a similar origin for the
810 deposits in the Nuussuaq Basin is possible, although with an influence of tectonic faulting.

811
812 The few sediment cores that have been retrieved from offshore in Greenland come from
813 estuaries and fjord heads and they all contain evidence of episodes of accumulation of vast
814 volumes of relatively coarse-grained sediments and hyperpycnal deposits (e.g. Lloyd et al.,
815 2005; Moros et al., 2006; Ó Cofaigh et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2014; Gilbert et al., 2017).
816 Most of these analyses have been conducted on ancient sediments and have not attributed a
817 specific timing or duration to the emplacement of these deposits; i.e. a particular meltwater-
818 sediment flux runoff regime has not been determined. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest
819 that for most parts of Greenland the geological record of outburst floods, perhaps of
820 megafloods, has yet to be detected. Indeed, Willems et al. (2011) have suggested that glacier
821 outburst flood deposits in shallow marine settings are probably far more widespread than
822 previously thought due to having similar sedimentological properties to normal proximal
823 glacimarine accumulation.

824
825 Large glacier outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland might be detected in the geological
826 record by identifying evidence of stress unloading as lakes suddenly drain, such as the faulted
827 shorelines at Lake Hullet in west Greenland (Dawson, 1983). Alternatively, a seismic tremor
828 can be caused by the propagation of an outburst flood wave through a pressurised glacier
829 hydrological network, as noted at Grænalón in Iceland (Roberts et al., 2005). Evidence of

830 unloading or of seismic tremors cannot be uniquely diagnostic of outburst floods however
831 because they have been noted in Greenland to be caused by normal ablation-fed water
832 movement (e.g. Bartholomaeus et al., 2015).

833

834 **6. Future large glacier outburst floods in Iceland and Greenland**

835 Over half of the volcanic systems in Iceland considered active in the Holocene are overlain by
836 glacier ice (Pagnoux et al., 2015a). There is a relationship between glacier retreat and thinning
837 and increased volcanic activity (Pagli and Sigmundsson, 2008; Tuffen, 2010); in Iceland
838 renewed volcanic activity could clearly signal eruptions that give rise to jökulhlaups.
839 Volcanically-generated glacier outburst floods are likely to persist for at least another two
840 centuries, despite the impact of climate change on ice cover (Jóhannesson et al., 2012). Over
841 the last few years, particularly in the wake of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption and associated
842 floods, attention has been focused on the possibility of large jökulhlaups from Katla and
843 Öräfajökull (e.g. Pagnoux et al., 2015b). In July 2011, there was a deepening of ice cauldrons
844 on Mýrdalsjökull and a glacial flood that swept away the Múlakvísl bridge and damaged
845 sections of road (Veðurstofa Íslands, 2011). There have been seismic swarms over recent years,
846 usually intensifying in late summer and autumn. Yet, if the seismic record is examined, similar
847 unrest has taken place at Katla several times since the 1950s without resulting in an explosive
848 eruption. Some studies indicate that there is magma storage in the roots of the volcano
849 (Veðurstofa Íslands, 2018), but there are currently no signs of this moving. Öräfajökull has
850 also been under greater surveillance recently. In November 2017, there was a period of
851 increased seismic activity and an ice cauldron 1 km wide and 15 to 20 m deep developed in the
852 ice-covered caldera, fuelling speculation about an eruption (McGarvie et al., 2017). The
853 development of the ice cauldron was associated with geothermal activity in the Öräfajökull
854 caldera from which there was a steady release of geothermal water through Kvíarjökull
855 (Veðurstofa Íslands, 2017). It could be as little as 20 minutes from the eruption onset to floods
856 reaching populated areas and infrastructure hence Öräfajökull, like Katla, is carefully
857 monitored. The potential for floods large enough to exhibit megaflood attributes and impacts
858 from both volcanoes exists, but the future temporal evolution of events in Katla and
859 Öräfajökull, along with other glacierised volcanoes in Iceland, is uncertain.

860

861 In Greenland, ongoing climate change and consequent deglaciation is causing glacier termini
862 to retreat and thin and thus according to the jökulhlaup cycle (Evans and Clague, 1994)
863 successive floods would be expected to become smaller. However, recently many lakes have

864 drained apparently for the first time during the satellite era (Carrivick and Quincey, 2014) and
865 some of these lakes are truly vast (e.g. Lake 480, Iluliallup Tasersua, Lake Tininnilik).
866 Furthermore, ongoing climate change is also causing record ice surface melt across the GrIS
867 and in July 2012, due to unusually warm air temperatures (e.g. Ngheim et al., 2012), ice melt
868 was augmented by unprecedented supraglacial lake drainage (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). Runoff
869 from the GrIS, as recorded by a gauge on the Watson River at Kangerlussuaq, reached a record
870 high, which was reached via a tripling of discharge in just two days (Mikkelsen et al., 2016).
871 Whilst this event in Greenland in July 2012 was not itself an outburst flood in the strictest
872 sense, the rapid onset, record flow magnitude and exceptional hydraulic power that it produced
873 are all characteristics of an outburst flood. There has never been an analysis of the landscape
874 impact of this latter type of flows, nor whether the record melt rapidly filled and/or caused
875 drainage of any ice-marginal lakes in Greenland. As climate change proceeds, it is reasonable
876 to expect more record melt, more record runoff and perhaps therefore large outburst floods in
877 Greenland that are large enough to have megaflood-type impacts.

878

879 **7. Conclusions**

880 In terms of total flood volume or peak discharge, few glacier outburst floods in Iceland and
881 Greenland are true megafloods. However, in terms of erosional and depositional impacts,
882 which were formed over very short time scales (often hours to days) and which are pervasive
883 in the landscape and geological record, several Iceland and Greenland jökulhlaups can be
884 identified to have megaflood attributes, most notably in their extensive landscape impact. For
885 these impacts to have been produced in this manner, then the hydraulics of these floods must
886 have been comparable to those of megafloods, whether bed shear stress was sufficient to cause
887 bedrock erosion, high sediment transport capacity (very high volume) and extreme flood
888 competence permitting the transport very high calibre boulders where they were available (Fig.
889 2), for example.

890

891 Nonetheless, there is still a question as to the extent to which the impacts of volcanically-
892 generated floods, which account for the majority of jökulhlaups in Iceland, can be used as
893 analogues to Quaternary megafloods, because the trigger mechanisms and hence the flood
894 routing and resultant hydrograph are likely to be different. For example, floodwater routing
895 through multiple outlets across the flanks of Kverkfjöll and Dyngjujökull on the north of
896 Vatnajökull, or the multiple outlets attributed to single floods into the Markarfljót (e.g. Smith
897 and Dugmore, 2006) are unlikely to be representative of many Quaternary ice-dammed lake

898 outburst floods where a dam breach and a single channel for initial floodwater egress is more
899 likely.

900

901 In Greenland many more ice-dammed lakes and many more sudden ice-dammed lake outbursts
902 probably occur than have been detected and reported. Of those lake drainages that have been
903 reported, some have been of a volume that would suggest the resultant floods were capable of
904 producing megaflood-type impacts. However, there has been no analysis of the landscapes and
905 landforms downstream of large ice-dammed lakes in Greenland. The exception is at Russell
906 Glacier, near Kangerlussuaq where the landscape in the vicinity Russell Glacier has been
907 studied and does contain bedrock canyons and giant fluvially-transported boulders (Carrivick
908 et al., 2016), which are megaflood-type landforms. Furthermore, almost all the ice-dammed
909 lakes in Greenland that have been reported to have drained have done so multiple times within
910 a few years as the lake basins refill with ablation-fed meltwater. This frequency of flooding in
911 Greenland contrasts strongly with the decades in between volcanically-generated floods in
912 Iceland and the millennia between the few megafloods in Iceland and megafloods elsewhere.
913 This repeated outburst flooding in Greenland means i) sustained high sedimentation rates in
914 confined valley sandar and so a flood signature in those sediments is obscured and ii) most
915 impacts of Greenland floods are probably offshore.

916

917 More widely, there remain several unresolved questions in the study of large glacier outburst
918 floods that are not specific to Iceland and Greenland floods but are important in determining
919 the geomorphological and sedimentary impacts of extremely large jökulhlaups; i.e. a
920 megaflood signature. For example, trigger mechanisms are negated in models of outburst
921 flooding (c.f. Carrivick et al., 2017b). We cannot constrain the processes that occur at flood
922 initiation sufficiently to be able to identify why some floods have a rapid rise to peak discharge
923 and some develop more slowly. We rarely have enough data to parameterise and validate
924 models of outburst floods that include sediment transport (e.g. Carrivick et al., 2009b, 2010,
925 2013) and geomorphological changes via bed and bank evolution (e.g. Guan et al., 2015).

926

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932

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