April 2018

If historic marine pollution ceases, will the natural intertidal community return? How exposure to and release from pollution disturbance shapes rocky intertidal communities in the Salish Sea

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Bard, Shannon; Eger, Aaron; and Baum, Julia, "If historic marine pollution ceases, will the natural intertidal community return? How exposure to and release from pollution disturbance shapes rocky intertidal communities in the Salish Sea" (2018). *Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference*. 157.

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If historic marine pollution ceases, will the natural intertidal community return? How exposure to and release from pollution disturbance shapes rocky intertidal communities in BC

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CSI Coastal Scene Investigation
Sites selected along pollution gradient
Pulp and paper pollution

- Toxicity
- Anoxia
- Physical disturbance
Improvements in Effluent Quality since EEM

Woodfibre, Howe Sound

Port Mellon, Howe Sound

Powell River

Prince Rupert

Data kindly provided by Environment Canada and Hatfield Consultants, 2004
Economic shutdowns

- Prince Rupert mill closed 2001
- Woodfibre mill closed 2006
- Powell River, closure of 1 of 2 historic mills
Intertidal Quadrat Studies - faunal data

Percent (%) Cover

Under-rock Species Diversity
Questions

1) Were species impacted and how have they recovered?

2) What species traits are selected for in polluted vs. unpolluted sites?

3) Can we assess the condition of a site based on the species present?
Q1: Initial impact - 1990s

* P < 0.05
Q1: Species recovery post regulations

![Graph showing species recovery](image)

- Howe Sound
- Prince Rupert
- Powell River

* P < 0.05
Q1: But how are they recovering?

Adapted from Baselga 2009
Q1: Species nestedness

Howe Sound*  
Powell River+  
Prince Rupert

* P < 0.05  
+ P < 0.1
Q1: Species turnover

![Boxplot showing species turnover over time at Howe Sound, Powell River, and Prince Rupert. The boxplot indicates significant differences at certain points, with * P < 0.05.](image-url)
**Q2: Trait assignment**

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Community average trait value
Q2: Which traits thrive?

\[ P < 0.001 \]
\[ R^2_{\text{adj}} = 0.52 \]
Q2: Which traits thrive?

\[ P = 0.03 \]
\[ R^2_{\text{adj}} = 0.05 \]
Q2: Trait implications

Predict & Assess
Q3: Indicator species

Presence-Absence of

[Images of various marine species]

Site Condition?
Q3: Determining indicator species

1) Split data into a) training set & b) test set
2) Build training models predicting condition with different combos of the 15 species as predictors
3) Assess predicted values against independent test data ($R^2$)

![Scatter plot with observed vs. predicted values]
Q3: How many species?

Most common species coefficients

73 % “accuracy”
Take aways

1) Mill pollution reduced species richness

2) Recovery *can* occur naturally
   - Beta diversity provides additional insights

3) Pollution selects for smaller, mobile species

4) It is possible to assess the condition of a site based on a subset of species (with good accuracy)
Contaminated Sites Applications

- Use of community traits index more informative than presence/absence surveys - insight into community health
- Identify sites which are not recovering naturally, candidates for restoration efforts
- Shoreline Cleanup & Assessment Technique (SCAT)
  - Use indicator species survey technique for oil spill response baseline surveys - time restrictive, easily train volunteers
Acknowledgements

• UVic, Aaron Eger, Julia Baum, Quinn Lowen, Tella Osler
• SFU, Katerina Vassilenko, Chris Kennedy, Vicki Marlatt, Fabiola Ukah, Jeremy Jackson
• Eric Chiang, DFO

Funding

• NSERC Engage & Discovery Grants
• Dalhousie University Fac of Science
• Howard Hughes Medical Institute
• Stanford University URO
• Haas Public Service Fellowship
• Morrison Institute for Population and Resource Studies
• Nova Scotia Dept of Economic Dev.
• YTV Environment Award
• NSERC Engage Grant
• MITACS
• DFO

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Acknowledgements

Consultation and logistics

• Metlakatla Nation
• Gitxaala Nation
• Lax Kw’alaams Nation
• Kitsumkalum Nation
• Kitselas Nation
• Northwest Community College
• Prince Rupert Port Authority
Thank you – Questions?

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