

1 **Capturing the Diversity of Subsurface Microbiota – Choice of Carbon Source for**  
2 **Microcosm Enrichment and Isolation of Groundwater Bacteria**

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23 **Abstract**

24 Improved and innovative enrichment/isolation techniques that yield to relevant  
25 isolates representing the true diversity of environmental microbial communities would  
26 significantly advance exploring the physiology of ecologically important taxa in  
27 ecosystems. Traditionally, either simple organic carbon (C) or yeast extract is used as C  
28 source in culture medium for microbial enrichment/isolation in laboratory. In natural  
29 environment, however, microbial population and evolution are greatly influenced by the  
30 property and composition of natural organic C. In this study, 8 types of organic C sources  
31 were fed to intrinsic groundwater microbes collected at Oak Ridge Reservation Field  
32 Research Center (ORR-FRC) background site for a 30-day incubation period to  
33 investigate the response of indigenous bacterial communities to different C sources. The  
34 tested C sources included simple organic C (glucose, acetate, benzoate, oleic acid, and  
35 cellulose) that are either traditionally used as C source in bacterial culture medium or  
36 present in natural environments; naturally occurring undefined complex C (bacterial cell  
37 lysate and sediment-derived natural organic matter (NOM)); as well as vitamin mixture  
38 which is a commonly used ingredient in culture medium. Our results clearly indicate that  
39 natural complex C substrates served better in enriching diverse bacteria compared to  
40 other C sources. Microcosms amended with small organic C (glucose, acetate, benzoate,  
41 or oleic acid) showed significantly lower biodiversity than control groups, dominated by  
42 only a few phyla of bacteria such as *Proteobacteria* and *Bacteroidetes* which are  
43 commonly isolated and already have diverse representative isolates, while those amended  
44 with natural complex C (cell lysate or NOM) displayed significantly higher biodiversity  
45 than control groups, in which three phyla (*Verrucomicrobia*, *Planctomycetes*, and

46 *Armatimonadetes*) that are poorly represented in published culture collections were  
47 abundantly enriched. Further isolation of pure bacterial strains from complex C-amended  
48 enrichments led to 51 species representing 4 phyla, 13 orders. Furthermore, 5 isolates  
49 with low similarities to published strains were considered to be novel. Results from this  
50 study will aid in the design of better cultivation and isolation strategy for maximize the  
51 diversity of organisms recovered from subsurface environment.

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53

## 54 **Introduction**

55           Using 16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) gene or metagenomics surveys from a wide  
56 range of habitats, scientists have uncovered an astounding diversity of bacteria living on  
57 our planet. Yet, only a small portion (<1%) of bacteria on Earth have been successfully  
58 cultivated<sup>1,2</sup> and about half of those reported bacterial phyla still lack cultivated  
59 representatives<sup>3</sup>. While rapid technological advances are being made in developing  
60 modern molecular tools such as metagenomics, metaproteomics, and metatranscriptomics  
61 to identify key microbial species and metabolic potential in a given environment, the  
62 complete interpretation of the data is constrained by the unavailability of reference  
63 genomes and isolates to serve as reference data, and validate the hypotheses that emerge  
64 from powerful omics-based data<sup>4</sup>.

65           For years scientists have been trying to develop cultivation/isolation methods and  
66 techniques, such as modification of growth media/conditions, use of diluted medium or  
67 serial dilution culture<sup>5,6</sup>, iChip<sup>7</sup>, diffusion chamber<sup>8-10</sup>, etc., to cultivate diverse  
68 environmental bacteria especially those ‘unculturable’ species under laboratory  
69 conditions<sup>11</sup>. Successful cultivation of bacteria critically depend on the choice of  
70 appropriate growth media and incubation conditions<sup>12</sup>. For most chemoheterotrophs,  
71 organic carbon (C) source is a key ingredient in culture medium since C incorporates into  
72 cellular matter for bacterial growth and serves as electron donor for energy transfer in  
73 bacteria. Traditionally, yeast extract or simple organic compounds, e.g., glucose, acetate,  
74 lactate, pyruvate, and casamino acids, are added as C source either individually or as a  
75 mixture to the cultivation medium<sup>13</sup>. However, these labile C usually lead to selective and  
76 biased growth of only specific microbes<sup>14,15</sup>.

77 To increase the diversity of enrichment/isolates from environmental samples,  
78 researchers have utilized media that mimic environmental habitats of microbes, and  
79 found that some previously uncultivable microbes could be grown in pure culture if  
80 provided with chemical components that mimics their natural environments<sup>8, 16-18</sup>. Natural  
81 organic matter (NOM) is the naturally occurring heterogeneous organic C source for most  
82 microbes in natural ecosystems, consisting of complex C that differ in molecular mass,  
83 solubility, structure, and functionality<sup>19-21</sup>. Recently, Nguyen et al. applied soil-extracted  
84 NOM as an ingredient in culture medium and obtained diverse bacterial isolates including  
85 those previously uncultured and novel species from soil<sup>22</sup>.

86 To date our knowledge and understanding of microbial ecology in the subsurface  
87 are still extremely scarce. Of the published 16S rRNA gene sequences in public databases,  
88 only <8% are derived from subsurface organisms, and only a small fraction of those are  
89 represented by genomes or isolates<sup>23</sup>. The lack of innovation and alternative to cultivation  
90 has severely limited the ability of microbiologists to characterize microbes that catalyze  
91 key biogeochemical processes in subsurface ecosystems. In this study, we aimed to  
92 explore the influence of naturally occurring complex C on cultivation and isolation of  
93 bacteria from subsurface groundwater from the Field Research Center (FRC) in Oak  
94 Ridge, TN. We employed microcosm enrichments and fed microbes from groundwater  
95 with bacterial cell lysate or sediment-extracted NOM as C source. As a comparison, we  
96 also included enrichment groups that were amended with relatively simple C sources, i.e.,  
97 small sugar (glucose), small metabolites (acetate or benzoate), fatty acid (oleic acid),  
98 polysaccharide (cellulose), or mixed vitamins. We included mixed vitamins since they  
99 are usually added as supplements to bacterial growth media<sup>24, 25</sup>. This knowledge would

100 benefit for optimizing the strategy for cultivation/isolation of relevant isolates  
101 representing the microbial diversity in the subsurface, which is critical for understanding  
102 the physiology of ecologically important taxa in subsurface ecosystems.

103

## 104 **Materials and Methods**

### 105 *Preparation of C stock solutions*

106 Standards of glucose, sodium acetate, sodium benzoate, cellulose, oleic acid,  
107 vitamins, and thioctic acid were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO). Stock  
108 solutions of glucose, sodium acetate, and sodium benzoate were prepared by dissolving  
109 the chemical in MilliQ-water (18.2 M $\Omega$ -cm, 0.22  $\mu$ m membrane filtered) at 200 mM, 200  
110 mM, and 50 mM, respectively, followed by filter-sterilization with filtration system (0.22  
111  $\mu$ m pore-sized, polyethersulfone (PES), Corning). Oleic acid and cellulose were added to  
112 MilliQ-water at an initial concentration of 50 g/L and 20 g/L, respectively, followed by  
113 autoclave sterilization. Since oleic acid and cellulose are generally insoluble, their  
114 concentrations in water are expressed as initial grams per liter. Stock solution of mixed  
115 vitamins, including vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>5</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>7</sub>, B<sub>9</sub>, B<sub>10</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, and thioctic acid, was  
116 prepared in MilliQ-water according to the recipe reported by Balch et al.<sup>24</sup> (Supporting  
117 Information), and then filter-sterilized (0.22  $\mu$ m pore-sized, PES, Corning).

118 Preparation procedure of cell lysate stock solution was modified based on  
119 published methods<sup>26, 27</sup>. A strain of *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, which was previously  
120 isolated in our lab from groundwater collected at Oak Ridge FRC background site was  
121 grown in Luria broth (LB) liquid medium at 30 °C under aerobic condition until the  
122 optical density at 600 nm (OD<sub>600</sub>) reached stationary phase. A 30-ml aliquot of the

123 culture was harvested and centrifuged at 6,000 *g* for 20 min. The supernatant was  
124 removed and the pellet was washed by MilliQ-water for three times and re-suspended in  
125 10 ml of MilliQ-water. A two-step lysis procedure was applied, including autoclaving  
126 and sonication in water bath for 2 hrs. Then the solution was centrifugation at 6,000 *g* for  
127 20 min. The supernatant was decanted and filtered through a syringe filter (0.2  $\mu\text{m}$  pore-  
128 sized, PES, Thermo Scientific). The filtrate was stored at 4 °C until use. Total organic C  
129 (TOC) content of the filtrate, i.e., cell lysate stock solution, was 2.67 g/L, measured by  
130 TOC-5050A Total Organic Carbon Analyzer (Shimadzu, Japan).

131         The sediment sample for NOM extraction was collected from a background well  
132 FW305 at ORR-FRC, at the depth of 0.3–1.1 m below ground surface. The potential  
133 bioavailable fraction of sediment NOM was extracted according to the method previously  
134 developed in our lab<sup>28</sup>. Briefly, the freeze-dried sediment sample was extracted with  
135 Milli-Q water via rotary shaking (170 rpm) overnight at 35 °C, and then sonicated in  
136 water bath for 2 hrs. The ratio of water and sediment was 4:1 (w/w). After extraction, the  
137 water-sediment mixtures were centrifuged at 6000 *g* for 20 min. The supernatant was  
138 decanted and sterilized using filtration system (0.22  $\mu\text{m}$  pore-sized, PES, Corning). The  
139 filtrate containing water-extractable NOM was freeze-dried, and the lyophilized material  
140 was stored at –20 °C until use.

141

#### 142 *Microcosm enrichment*

143         Groundwater sample was collected from a background well GW305 adjoining to  
144 the sediment well FW305 at ORR-FRC in April, 2016. After being collected, the  
145 groundwater was shipped immediately to the lab with ice packs, and stored at 4 °C for up

146 to 1 week. At the time of sampling, the groundwater temperature was measured to be  
147 15.4 °C, pH was 6.37, dissolved oxygen (DO) was 1.39 mg/L, and TOC was 5.9 mg/L.  
148 The DO in groundwater exceeded 0.5 mg/L, indicating the groundwater sample's redox  
149 state was oxic (Ohio EPA, [http://epa.ohio.gov/Portals/28/documents/gwqcp/redox\\_ts.pdf](http://epa.ohio.gov/Portals/28/documents/gwqcp/redox_ts.pdf)).

150 Microcosm experiments were performed in pre-sterilized 250 ml-flasks, each  
151 containing 89 ml of filtered groundwater (0.22 µm pore-sized, PES, Corning) as culture  
152 medium, 10 ml of unfiltered groundwater (cell density:  $2.1 \times 10^6$  cells/ml) as inoculum,  
153 and 1 ml of C stock solution. For oleic acid and cellulose amended groups, the C stock  
154 solutions were shaken thoroughly to mix the solution and undissolved chemicals well  
155 before adding to the culture. For sediment NOM amended group, the lyophilized material  
156 was fully dissolved in filtered groundwater at 200 mg/L, and then the solution was filter-  
157 sterilized (0.22 µm pore-sized, PES, Corning). TOC content of the filtrate was measured  
158 to be 48.4 mg/L. A 90 ml aliquot of the filtrate (containing sediment NOM) was added  
159 with 10 ml of unfiltered groundwater to form a microcosm.

160 A control group without any C amendment was included in this study, containing  
161 90 ml of filtered groundwater and 10 ml of unfiltered groundwater. All groups were  
162 performed in six replicates, and 1 blank control (without inoculum) was included in each  
163 group to monitor potential microbial contamination during incubation. All microcosms  
164 were incubated aerobically at 25 °C in the dark for up to 30 days, with rotary shaking at  
165 100 rpm. At each sampling time point (day 10, 20, and 30), a 10 ml aliquot of subculture  
166 was sampled using a volumetric pipette. Microbes were collected by filtration through a  
167 membrane filter (0.2 µm pore-sized, PES, 25 mm, Sterlitech Corp.). The filter was then  
168 removed from the syringe filter holder and kept frozen at -80 °C until DNA extraction.



169

170 *DNA extraction for microbial community analysis*

171 Before performing DNA extraction, the filters were cut into 2 mm-wide stripes  
172 using sterile blades and put into DNA extraction tubes provided in PowerMax Soil DNA  
173 Isolation Kit (MO BIO Laboratories, Inc., Carlsbad, CA). DNA was extracted following  
174 the manufacturer's protocol, and quantified using the Qubit dsDNA HS Assay Kit (Life  
175 Technologies, Eugene, OR) with a Qubit fluorometer (Invitrogen, Eugene, OR). The  
176 extracted DNA samples were stored at  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  until further processing.

177

178 *16S rRNA gene amplicon library preparation*

179 We completed a two-step PCR protocol to first amplify the 16S rRNA gene V4  
180 variable region, then add Illumina barcodes and adapters for sequencing. The DNA  
181 samples were each aliquot into one of three randomized plate layouts in a laminar flow  
182 hood. Up to 25  $\mu\text{l}$  of each sample was transferred, with eight wells per plate left open for  
183 amplification negative controls.

184 Before the first step PCR, all samples were subjected to a qPCR at multiple  
185 dilutions to determine target dilutions and threshold cycles for the first step. We used 16S  
186 rRNA gene primers PE16S\_V4\_U515\_F and PE16S\_V4\_E786R (Supplementary Table  
187 S1). Both 1:1 and 1:10 dilutions of each sample were prepared in duplicate with 0.5X  
188 SYBR Green I nucleic acid gel stain (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO), plus 280 nM each  
189 primer and the standard reagents in the Phusion High-Fidelity PCR Kit (New England  
190 BioLabs, Ipswich, MA). Samples were then cycled under the following qPCR conditions:  
191 98  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  30 sec; 30 cycles of 98  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  30 sec, 52  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  30 sec, 72  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  30 sec; 4  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  hold. Threshold

192 cycles were calculated and dilutions were prepared to normalize samples and ensure  
193 consistent amplification cycles across plates. PCR under the same conditions, minus the  
194 SYBR Green, was completed in quadruplicate for each sample, then quadruplicate sets  
195 were pooled and purified with Agencourt AMPure XP Beads according to the  
196 manufacturer's protocol (Beckman Coulter, Brea, CA).

197       The second step PCR was used to add sample indices and final Illumina adaptors  
198 to the 16S rRNA gene amplicons. Reactions were compiled using the Phusion High-  
199 Fidelity PCR Kit according to the manufacturer's instructions, with 420 nM indexing  
200 primers PE-III-PCR-F and PE-IV-PCR-R (Supplementary Table S1), then cycled under  
201 the following conditions: 98 °C 30 sec; 7 cycles of 98 °C 30 sec, 83 °C 30 sec, 72 °C 30  
202 sec; 4 °C hold. Final libraries were purified with Agencourt AMPure XP Beads according  
203 to the manufacturer's protocol, then quantified and pooled prior to 2 × 250 paired-end  
204 sequencing on an Illumina MiSeq. Data are available on the SRA under accession.

205

206 *16S rRNA gene amplicon data processing and operational taxonomic unit (OTU)*  
207 *analysis*

208       Raw reads were quality filtered and clustered into operational taxonomic units  
209 (OTUs) primarily with the QIIME software package<sup>29</sup> using default parameters unless  
210 otherwise noted. Paired-end reads were joined with the `join_paired_ends.py` command,  
211 then barcodes were extracted from the successfully joined reads with the  
212 `extract_barcodes.py` command (and additional parameters `-c barcode_in_label, -l 16, -s`  
213 `'#'`). Quality filtering was accomplished with `split_libraries_fastq.py` (`--barcode_type 16,`  
214 `--min_per_read_length_fraction 0.40, -q 20, --max_barcode_errors 0, --`

215 max\_bad\_run\_length 0, --phred\_offset 33). We checked for the correct forward and  
216 reverse primers with a custom script and exported reads with primers removed and length  
217 trimmed to 225 bp. Finally, chimeric sequences were removed using  
218 identify\_chimeric\_seqs.py (-m usearch61, --suppress\_usearch61\_ref) followed by  
219 filter\_fasta.py.

220 After quality filtering, reads were clustered into 97% OTUs, classified against a  
221 16S rRNA database, and aligned in order to build phylogenetic trees. We ran the QIIME  
222 commands pick\_otus.py, pick\_rep\_set.py (-m most\_abundant), and make\_otu\_table.py to  
223 produce the OTU table. The RDP classifier was used to assign taxonomy with default  
224 parameters and the 16S rRNA training set 16<sup>30</sup>. Representative sequences from OTUs  
225 with > 0.1% and > 5% abundance in at least one experimental sample were selected for  
226 alignment and tree construction. Alignment was completed with SINA 1.2.11 using the  
227 SILVA reference alignment (SSURef\_NR99\_128\_SILVA\_07\_09\_16\_opt.arb)<sup>31</sup>. Trees  
228 were constructed FastTree 2.1.9 with a generalized time-reversible model<sup>32</sup>.

229

### 230 *Bacterial isolation*

231 The bacterial cell lysate-amended and NOM-amended enrichments at each time  
232 point were used as inoculums for further isolation. Each selected enrichment sample was  
233 streaked on complex C agar plate, which was prepared using the same medium as  
234 corresponding liquid enrichment with 1.5% agar (BD Biosciences, USA). We also  
235 streaked each selected enrichment sample on diluted culture media (with 1.5% agar), i.e.,  
236 1/25 LB, 1/25 tryptic soy broth (TSB), and 1/10 Reasoner's 2A (R2A), to obtain as many  
237 colonies as possible. The plates were incubated at 27 °C in the dark. Bacterial colonies

238 were repeatedly streaked until single colonies were obtained. The single colony was  
239 picked from the plate and transferred to 3 ml of corresponding liquid medium. The liquid  
240 cultures were incubated at 27 °C in the dark for up to 3 weeks before DNA extraction.

241

#### 242 *Species identification*

243 Genomic DNA of isolates were extracted using a PureLink Genomic DNA Mini  
244 Kit (Invitrogen, United States) following manufacturer's protocol. 16S rRNA genes were  
245 amplified (initial denaturation step at 98°C for 5 min, followed by 30 cycles at 95°C for  
246 30 s, 50°C for 30 s and 72°C for 2 min, followed by a final step at 72°C for 3 min) using  
247 the eubacterial primers 27F (AGA GTT TGA TCC TGG CTC AG) and 1492R (ACG  
248 GCT ACC TTG TTA CGA CTT) purchased from Integrated DNA Technologies, Inc.  
249 (USA). Cleanup of PCR products and DNA sequencing were performed at University of  
250 California Berkeley DNA Sequencing Facility. The PCR products were sequenced using  
251 the internal primers 27F and 1492R. Sequences were obtained by Sanger sequencing with  
252 ABI 3730XL DNA Analyzers (ThermoFisher, United States). Consensus sequences  
253 (1200–1400 base pairs) from forward and reverse sequences were generated using  
254 Geneious (version 9.1.3). A subset of isolate's sequences was deposited in Genbank  
255 under the access codes XXX to XXX (Table 1). For bacterial isolates identification,  
256 Megablast (Genbank) BLAST was used to obtain the top hits.

257

#### 258 *Data analysis and statistics*

259 Shannon's diversity index ( $H'$ ) and multivariate statistics were performed using  
260 the R package *vegan*. OTU distributions were transformed into relative abundances using

261 the function *decostand*. These were subjected to Hellinger transformation before  
262 calculation of Bray-Curtis dissimilarity matrices comparing community composition  
263 between samples. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) using function  
264 *metaMDS* was performed using these dissimilarity matrices. Multivariate analysis of  
265 variance (MANOVA) model was implemented in the *vegan* function *adonis*. Analysis of  
266 similarity (ANOSIM) was carried out based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarities in order to  
267 evaluate the effect of C amendment and incubation time on community structure.

268 C utilization was summarized using available replicates for each treatment  
269 condition and sampling time point. In this study, an OTU was visualized as actively  
270 utilizing a C source if it was present with >1% relative abundance in at least three  
271 replicates for any time point (day 10, 20, or 30). We described generalist species as those  
272 with all C utilizations (including control group), specialists as those with a single C  
273 utilization, and labeled those in between as intermediates. Those without any C  
274 designations were either with low abundance in the three time points or showed transient  
275 growth between these time points.

276

## 277 **Results**

### 278 *Complex C sources increased bacterial diversity in microcosm enrichments*

279 In this study, 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing resulted in over 10 M  
280 prokaryotic 16S rRNA gene reads which were clustered into 3463 OTUs. Only rarefied  
281 OTU richness was considered further, in order to compensate for differences in  
282 sequencing depth between 144 samples. No DNA was detected in blank controls,  
283 suggesting that microbial contamination was negligible during incubation.

284 Statistical analysis showed that amended C source and incubation time both had  
285 significant influences on bacterial community structure (MANOVA/*adonis* and ANOSIM,  
286  $p = 0.001$ ). C source was the major driver of community dissimilarity (MANOVA/*adonis*,  
287  $R^2 = 0.56$ ; ANOSIM,  $R = 0.88$ ), whereas incubation time contributed to a lesser extent to  
288 the variation (MANOVA/*adonis*,  $R^2 = 0.09$ ; ANOSIM,  $R = 0.12$ ). Accordingly, samples  
289 were grouped on NMDS ordination diagram based on the type of amended C source.  
290 Figure 1 clearly shows that the trajectory of bacterial communities is influenced by C  
291 substrates. Bacterial composition in cultures amended with simple small organic C such  
292 as glucose, acetate, benzoate, or oleic acid were noticeably similar to each other at the  
293 early stage of incubation, and then diversified (Figure 1). In cultures amended with  
294 undefined complex C, such as bacterial cell lysate or sediment NOM, the bacterial  
295 community separates from other groups early on (Figure 1).

296 The complexity of C substrates also affected bacterial community diversity,  
297 which was evaluated by Shannon's diversity index ( $H'$ ). As shown in Figure 2,  
298 enrichments with simple small organic C (glucose, acetate, benzoate, or oleic acid) have  
299 generally lower  $H'$  values than those in the control group at that corresponding time point,  
300 suggesting that simple small organic C sources may decrease community diversity and  
301 lead to enrichment of a few bacteria species that preferentially utilize specific C. On the  
302 contrary, the  $H'$  values in enrichments amended with undefined complex C (bacterial cell  
303 lysate or sediment NOM) are higher than those in corresponding control group as well as  
304 other groups (Figure 2), suggesting that complex C sources encourage cultivation and  
305 enrichment of more diverse bacteria compared to simple organic C sources.

306 No significant difference in community composition and diversity was observed between  
307 vitamins or cellulose-amended groups and control group (Figure 1 and 2), indicating that  
308 these C substrates had insignificant influence on bacterial communities.

309

310 *Complex C sources enriched rarely cultivated bacterial taxa*

311 We further studied taxonomic responses of subsurface groundwater bacterial  
312 communities to different C sources. Out of the quality-filtered reads, 21 phyla and 94  
313 orders were taxonomically identified, covering 71–100% of entire reads, except two  
314 samples (57% and 60%) in bacterial cell lysate-amended group. All phyla and 34  
315 abundant orders (with relative abundance >1% in any sample) are presented in Figure 3  
316 and Figure 4, respectively.

317 Except for glucose-amended enrichments, *Proteobacteria* was the most dominant  
318 phylum especially in benzoate- and oleic acid-amended groups (Figure 3). *Bacteroidetes*  
319 was mostly dominant over *Proteobacteria* in glucose-amended enrichments, and was also  
320 highly abundant in other groups (Figure 3). It is worth noting that *Verrucomicrobia* and  
321 *Planctomycetes* were present abundantly in cultures with sediment NOM as the C source.  
322 Only a handful isolates of *Verrucomicrobia* have been successfully cultivated thus far<sup>5, 33,</sup>  
323 <sup>34</sup>, although members of this bacterial phylum are ubiquitous in the environment<sup>35, 36</sup>.  
324 *Planctomycetes* is of deep interest to microbiologist due to their unique and peculiar  
325 characteristics, and only ~2% of strains in this phylum have been isolated in pure  
326 culture<sup>37</sup>. These two phyla existed in NOM-amended enrichments with a clear succession  
327 pattern. *Verrucomicrobia* was highly abundant at an early stage and significantly  
328 diminished over time, while *Planctomycetes* became one of major phyla at late stages

329 (Figure 3). It was reported that *Planctomycetes* are comparatively slow growing  
330 organisms with low demand for C and nitrogen sources<sup>37</sup>, which may explain their late  
331 appearance in the cultures. The phylum *Armatimonadetes* was also abundantly present in  
332 NOM-amended enrichments. *Armatimonadetes* has long been lacking of isolated member  
333 until 2011<sup>38</sup>, and so far only 3 isolated strains in this phylum have been reported<sup>38-40</sup>.

334 At the order level, microcosms amended with simple small organic C highly  
335 enriched a few orders such as *Cytophagales*, *Burkholderiales*, *Rhodocyclales*,  
336 *Caulobacteriales*, and *Oceanospirillales* (Figure 4). As a comparison, in complex C-  
337 amended microcosms, diverse orders were enriched, including those that were hardly  
338 enriched in other groups, e.g., *Verrucomicrobiales*, *Gemmatales*, *Planctomycetales*,  
339 *Flavobacteriales*, *Solibacteriales*, and *Sphingobacteriales* (Figure 4).

340

#### 341 *C utilization pattern*

342 Different bacterial species may have different preferable C sources when growing  
343 in culture medium under laboratory condition. In this study, species that were enriched on  
344 at least one C source were selected and classified as generalist, intermediate, or specialist  
345 based on the criteria described above. As shown in Figure 5, the 4 generalists (that can be  
346 enriched on all types of C sources in this study) include one *Betaproteobacteria*  
347 (*Pelomonas* sp.), two *Gammaproteobacteria* (*Halomonas* sp. and *Shewanella* sp.), and  
348 one *Bacteroidetes* (*Sediminibacterium* sp.), indicating that these species likely harbor the  
349 metabolic potential of utilizing diverse C sources, from simple small organic C to  
350 undefined complex C. There are 30 intermediates that were enriched on 2–8 types of C



351 sources, distributing in *Alpha-*, *Beta-*, *Gamma-proteobacteria*, *Bacteroidetes*,  
352 *Chlamydiae*, and *Verrucomicrobia* (Figure 5).

353 A total of 44 specialists that were exclusively enriched on specific type of C  
354 source are identified, a half of which were preferably grown with sediment NOM,  
355 including some novel (unclassified) species and those are rarely cultivated in the lab such  
356 as *Armatinomas* sp. and *Planctomyces* sp. (Figure 5). Some species within the same  
357 genus differed in C utilization pattern. For example, *Legionella* sp.\_1 could be enriched  
358 on benzoate and bacterial cell lysate, while *Legionella* sp.\_2, 3, and 4 were only enriched  
359 on bacterial cell lysate, sediment NOM, and groundwater indigenous NOM (control  
360 group), respectively (Figure 5).

361

#### 362 *Isolates from complex C-amended microcosm enrichments*

363 From the enrichments amended with complex C (bacterial cell lysate or NOM),  
364 we were able to isolate and cultivate a total of 271 pure strains of bacteria, including fast-  
365 growing (within 2 days) and slow-growing (up to 3 weeks) isolates. These isolates were  
366 grouped into 51 species, representing 4 phyla and 13 orders (Table 1).

367 Based on 16S rRNA similarity to published species, candidates of novel species  
368 were defined by comparison of 16S rRNA similarity at a threshold of 98%, novel genus  
369 level at 90–95%, and novel family level at an off-limit lower than 90%<sup>22</sup>. According to  
370 this criteria, five novel bacteria were isolated from subsurface groundwater in this study,  
371 including three novel species: FW305-C-84 (*Dyadobacter sediminis* strain Z12, 97%),  
372 FW305-C-176I (*Rhizobium rosettiformans* strain W3, 96%), and FW305-C-3  
373 (*Sinimarini bacterium flocculans* strain NH6-24, 96%); one novel genus candidate:

374 FW305-C-2 (*Panacagrimonas perspica* strain Gsoil 142, 93%); and one novel family  
375 candidate: FW305-C-21 (*Solitalea canadensis* strain DSM 3403, 86%).

376 The isolation results were then compared with 16S rRNA gene surveys of  
377 enrichments in order to see how efficient complex C can serve as a substrate for diverse  
378 bacterial isolation. Of high significance is the fact that we were successful in cultivating  
379 one-third (11 out of 33) of the enriched orders identified by the molecular technique  
380 through isolation efforts (Figure 4). Matched isolates were also obtained for a quarter (19  
381 out of 78) of enriched species detected by the molecular method, including 1 generalist, 7  
382 intermediates, and 11 specialists (Figure 5).

383

## 384 **Discussion**

385 An often-invoked principle in microbial ecology is the notion that “everything is  
386 everywhere, and the environment selects.” Under this paradigm, we expect that  
387 subsurface bacteria communities would respond differently to different C sources in  
388 culture medium. In this study, we carried out microcosm experiments in the lab and  
389 provided intrinsic bacterial communities from freshly collected groundwater amended  
390 with different C sources, including simple small organic C (glucose, acetate, benzoate, or  
391 oleic acid), undefined complex C (bacterial cell lysate or NOM), polysaccharide  
392 (cellulose), and vitamins mix. Results showed that greater diversity of bacteria was  
393 recovered from subsurface groundwater under laboratory cultivation condition by using  
394 complex C sources. Some rarely cultured phyla such as *Verrucomicrobia*,  
395 *Planctomycetes*, and *Armatimonadetes* were enriched on sediment NOM, but not on  
396 traditional simple small organic C sources (Figure 3). The small organic C only enriched

397 a few phyla which are commonly isolated and already have diverse representative isolates  
398 (Figure 2). As the major naturally occurring C sources for microbes in the subsurface,  
399 sediment NOM are mixtures of heterogeneous organic substrates containing proteins,  
400 nucleic acids, lipids, carbohydrates, etc<sup>41</sup>. These undefined complex C support various  
401 subsurface bacteria in culture medium under laboratory condition, which may benefit for  
402 cultivation and isolation of key bacteria species from subsurface environment.

403 Further isolation led to 51 species from four different phyla, including 5 novel  
404 isolates by using complex C-amended enrichments as inoculums on pour agar plates  
405 (Table 1). Most isolates belonged to the most dominant phylum *Proteobacteria*.  
406 Although being enriched in liquid cultures, species from phyla *Verrucomicrobia*,  
407 *Planctomycetes*, and *Armatimonadetes* failed to grow as pure colonies on agar plates in  
408 this study, suggesting that other isolation techniques such as serial dilution are needed in  
409 order to get pure cultures of these bacteria. In total, about one-third of enriched orders  
410 and one-fourth of enriched species known from molecular surveys were recovered by  
411 isolation and had pure cultured representatives (Figure 4 and 5). The recovery of multiple  
412 species is encouraging and indicates progress toward a better recovery of diverse  
413 microbes from the subsurface.

414 Cultivation attempts undertaken at several FRC sites have produced limited  
415 numbers of microbial isolates<sup>9, 42, 43</sup>. Fields et al.<sup>43</sup> used conventional direct plating  
416 method with nitrate amended nutrient broth or MR2A medium for bacterial isolation  
417 from one FRC groundwater (background) sample, obtaining 13 species classified in two  
418 phyla: *Proteobacteria* (*Alpha-*, *Beta-*, *Gamma-*, and *Delta-*) and *Actinobacteria*.  
419 Bollmann et al.<sup>9</sup> applied *in situ* diffusion chamber incubation technique to isolate

420 bacterial species from FRC contaminated sediment. They obtained 61 strains and 50  
421 species representing *Proteobacteria* (*Alpha-*, *Beta-*, and *Gamma-*), *Bacteroidetes*,  
422 *Actinobacteria*, and *Firmicutes*, the same phyla as we obtained in this study. They also  
423 used conventional direct plating method for isolation and obtained only 8 species  
424 representing *Proteobacteria* (*Alpha-* and *Gamma-*), *Verrucomicrobia*, and *Actinobacteria*.  
425 Compared to diffusion chamber-based approach, the method used in this study is an  
426 easier application in laboratories to obtain comparably diverse bacterial isolates.

427 In summary, this study shows natural complex C substrates may enrich much  
428 more diverse bacterial communities from subsurface groundwater compared to traditional  
429 simple small organic C sources. Additionally, isolation was simpler and could be directly  
430 subcultured to obtain bacterial pure cultures for further investigation of physiology and  
431 geochemical roles of key species in subsurface ecosystems.

432

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587

588

589 **Figure Legends:**

590

591 **Figure 1.** Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) based on Bray-Curtis  
592 dissimilarities of bacterial community composition.

593

594 **Figure 2.** Bacterial diversity of enrichments amended with different C sources, as  
595 indicated by Shannon's diversity index ( $H'$ ). Significance between experimental group  
596 and corresponding control group is indicated by \*\*\* when  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* when  $p < 0.01$ ,  
597 and \* when  $p < 0.05$ .

598

599 **Figure 3.** Relative abundance of each taxonomic phylum.

600

601 **Figure 4.** Relative abundance of each taxonomic order ( $> 1\%$  in any sample). Orders  
602 having representative isolates in this study were marked with red underlines.

603

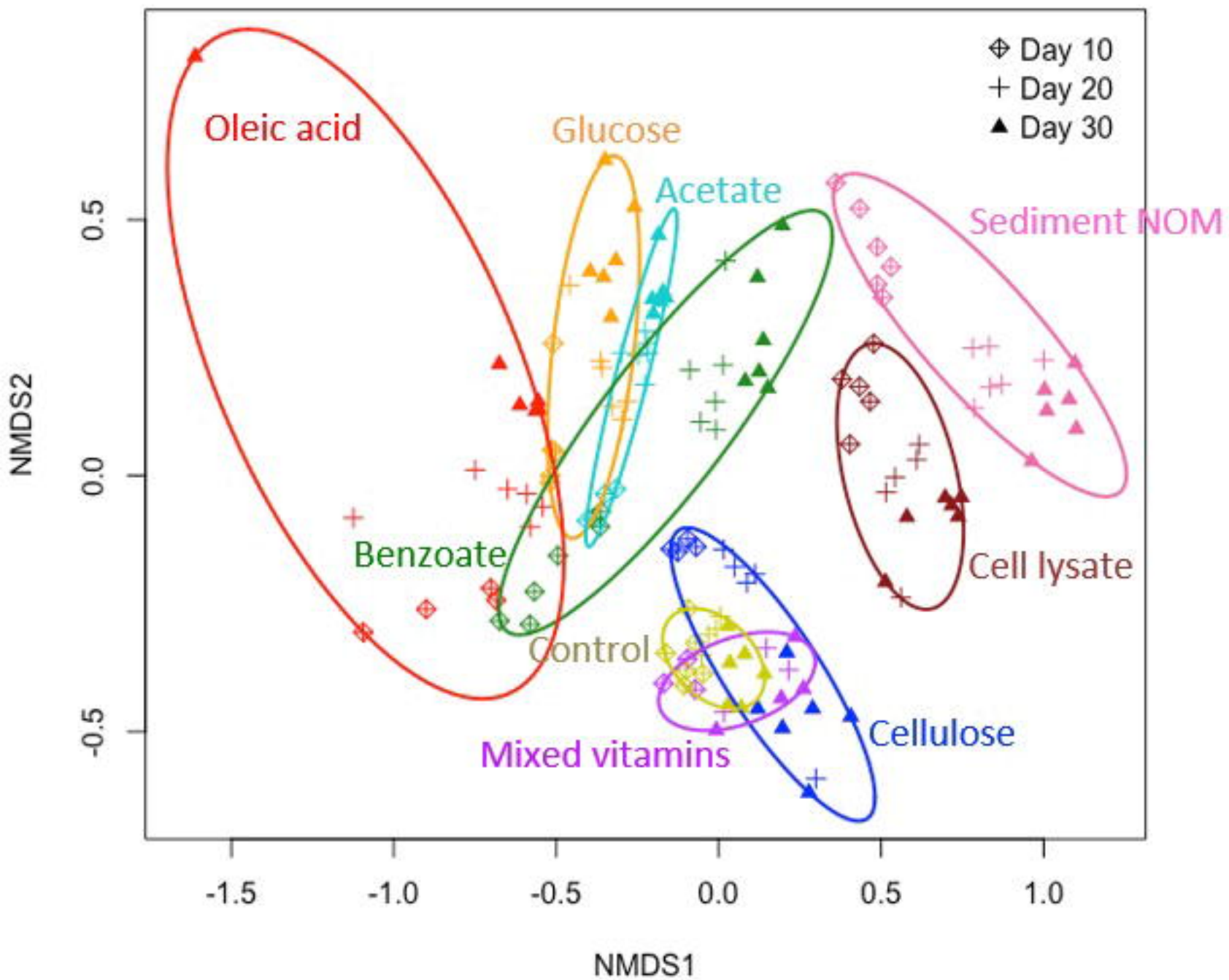
604 **Figure 5.** Enriched bacterial species ( $>1\%$  in at least three replicates for any time point)  
605 on different C sources. Species having representative isolates in this study were marked  
606 with red underlines.

607

Table 1. Isolates from microcosm enrichments amended with cell lysate (CL) or sediment NOM.

Phylum	Order	Isolate ID	Accession number	Highest 16S rRNA gene sequence similarity [GenBank sequence ID]	Similarity	C source in the inoculum
Actinobacteria	Micrococcales	FW305-C-20		<i>Microbacterium maritypicum</i> strain DSM 12512 [NR_114986.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-125		<i>Herbiconiux solani</i> strain K 134/01 [NR_116995.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-176A		<i>Leucobacter iarius</i> strain 40 [NR_042414.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-184C		<i>Glaciihabitans tibetensis</i> strain MP203 [NR_133754.1]	98	CL
Bacteroidetes	Chitinophagales	FW305-C-49		<i>Sediminibacterium goheungense</i> strain HME7863 [NR_133854.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-178		<i>Sediminibacterium salmoneum</i> strain NJ-44 [NR_044197.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-185		<i>Terrimonas soli</i> strain FL-8 [NR_159891.1]	98	CL
	Cytophagales	FW305-C-70		<i>Flectobacillus roseus</i> strain GFA-11 [NR_116312.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-80		<i>Emticicia ginsengisoli</i> strain Gsoil 085 [NR_041373.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-84		<i>Dyadobacter sediminis</i> strain Z12 [NR_134722.1]	97	NOM
	Sphingobacteriales	FW305-C-75		<i>Pedobacter ginsengisoli</i> strain Gsoil 104 [NR_041374.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-21		<i>Solitalea canadensis</i> strain DSM 3403 [NR_074099.1]	86	CL
Firmicutes	Bacillales	FW305-C-191		<i>Bacillus firmus</i> strain NBRC 15306 [NR_112635.1]	99	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-48		<i>Brevibacillus agri</i> strain DSM 6348 [NR_040983.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-1		<i>Brevibacillus nitrificans</i> strain DA2 [NR_112926.1]	100	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-190		<i>Paenibacillus lautus</i> strain NBRC 15380 [NR_112724.1]	98	CL
		FW305-C-202		<i>Paenibacillus naphthalenovorans</i> strain PR-N1 [NR_028817.1]	99	CL
Proteobacteria (Alpha)	Caulobacterales	FW305-C-18		<i>Brevundimonas vesicularis</i> strain NBRC 12165 [NR_113586.1]	100	CL
		FW305-C-128		<i>Caulobacter fusiformis</i> strain ATCC 15257 [NR_025320.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-130		<i>Caulobacter profundus</i> strain DS48-5-2 [NR_133716.1]	99	NOM
	Rhizobiales	FW305-C-122		<i>Afipia broomeae</i> strain F186 [NR_029200.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-52		<i>Aminobacter niigataensis</i> strain DSM 7050 [NR_025302.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-92		<i>Bosea lupini</i> strain R-45681 [NR_108514.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-101		<i>Bosea robiniae</i> strain R-46070 [NR_108516.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-74		<i>Bosea vestrisii</i> strain 34635 [NR_028799.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-47		<i>Devosia insulae</i> strain DS-56 [NR_044036.1]	99	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-198		<i>Methylobacterium oryzae</i> strain CBMB20 [NR_043104.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-112		<i>Nordella oligomobilis</i> strain N21 [NR_114615.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-8		<i>Rhizobium herbae</i> strain CCBAU 83011 [NR_117530.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-176I		<i>Rhizobium rosettiformans</i> strain W3 [NR_116445.1]	96	CL
		FW305-C-134A		<i>Phreatobacter stygius</i> strain YC6-17 [NR_158009.1]	99	NOM
	Rhodospirillales	FW305-C-103		<i>Roseomonas rubra</i> strain: S5 [NR_152066.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-119		<i>Roseomonas stagni</i> strain HS-69 [NR_041660.1]	98	NOM
	Sphingomonadales	FW305-C-71		<i>Novosphingobium aquaticum</i> strain THW-SA1 [NR_148323.1]	99	NOM

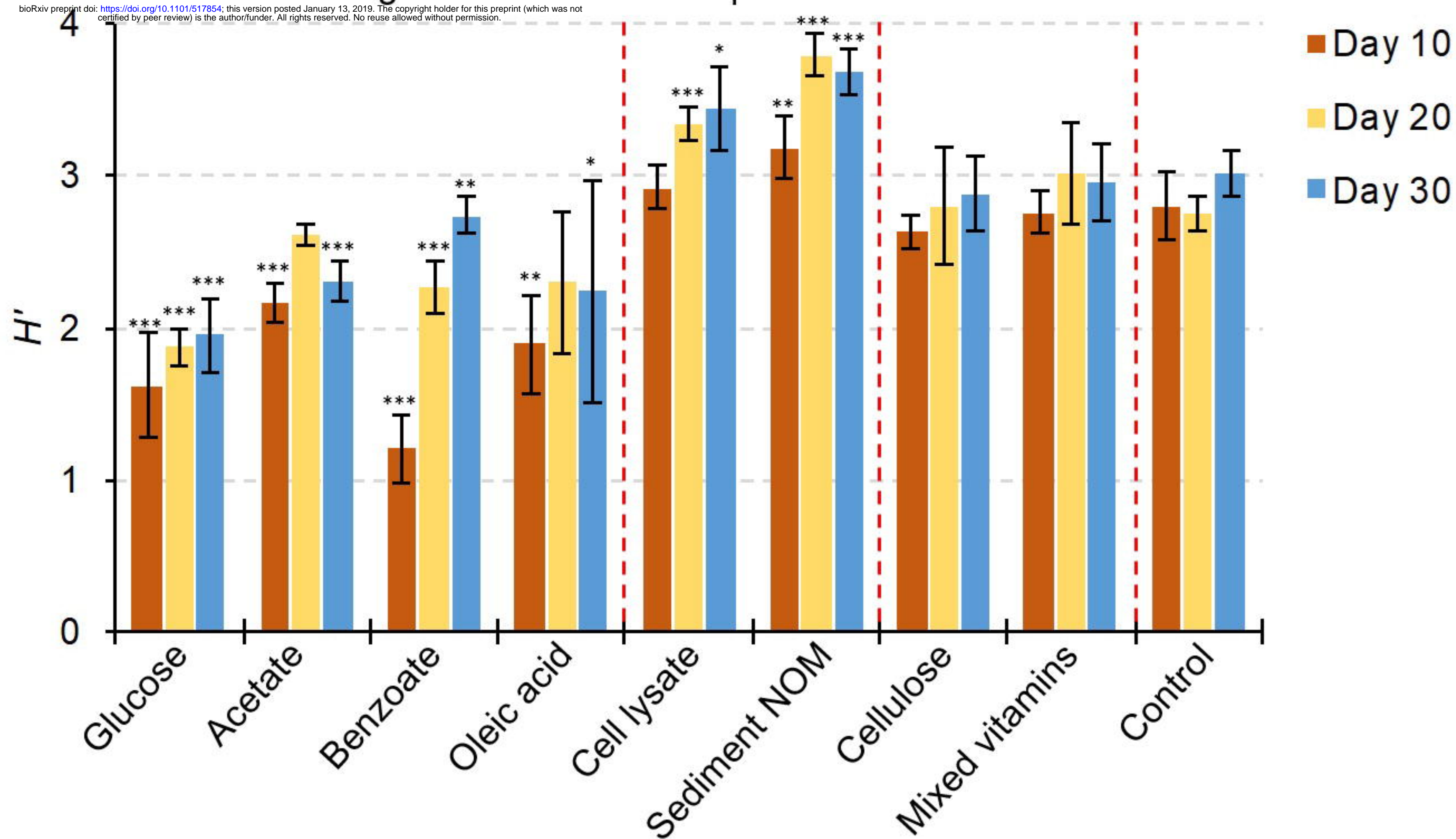
		FW305-C-111		<i>Novosphingobium aromaticivorans</i> strain DSM 12444 [NR_074261.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-53		<i>Novosphingobium subterraneum</i> strain NBRC 16086 [NR_113838.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-94		<i>Sphingomonas koreensis</i> strain NBRC 16723 [NR_113868.1]	99	NOM
		FW305-C-56		<i>Sphingomonas wittichii</i> strain RW1 [NR_074268.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-54		<i>Sphingopyxis panaciterrae</i> strain Gsoil 124 [NR_112561.1]	99	CL
<i>Proteobacteria</i> (Beta)	<i>Burkholderiales</i>	FW305-C-28		<i>Achromobacter deleyi</i> strain LMG 3458 [NR_152014.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-31		<i>Achromobacter marplatensis</i> strain B2 [NR_116198.1]	99	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-25		<i>Acidovorax wautersii</i> strain NF 1078 [NR_109656.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-176C		<i>Cupriavidus basilensis</i> strain DSM 11853 [NR_025138.1]	98	CL
		FW305-C-136		<i>Curvibacter fontanus</i> strain AQ9 [NR_112221.1]	99	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-24		<i>Pseudacidovorax intermedius</i> strain CC-21 [NR_044241.1]	99	CL, NOM
	FW305-C-7		<i>Variovorax boronicumulans</i> strain NBRC 103145 [NR_114214.1]	99	CL	
	<i>Rhodocyclales</i>	FW305-C-19		<i>Dechloromonas agitata</i> strain CKB [NR_024884.1]	98	CL
<i>Proteobacteria</i> (Gamma)	<i>Nevskiales</i>	FW305-C-40		<i>Hydrocarboniphaga effusa</i> strain AP103 [NR_029102.1]	99	CL
		FW305-C-2		<i>Panacagrimonas perspica</i> strain Gsoil 142 [NR_112617.1]	93	CL, NOM
		FW305-C-3		<i>Sinimarinibacterium flocculans</i> strain NH6-24 [NR_137419.1]	96	CL
	<i>Pseudomonadales</i>	FW305-C-5		<i>Pseudomonas lactis</i> strain DSM 29167 [NR_156986.1]	99	CL



# Small organic C

# Complex C

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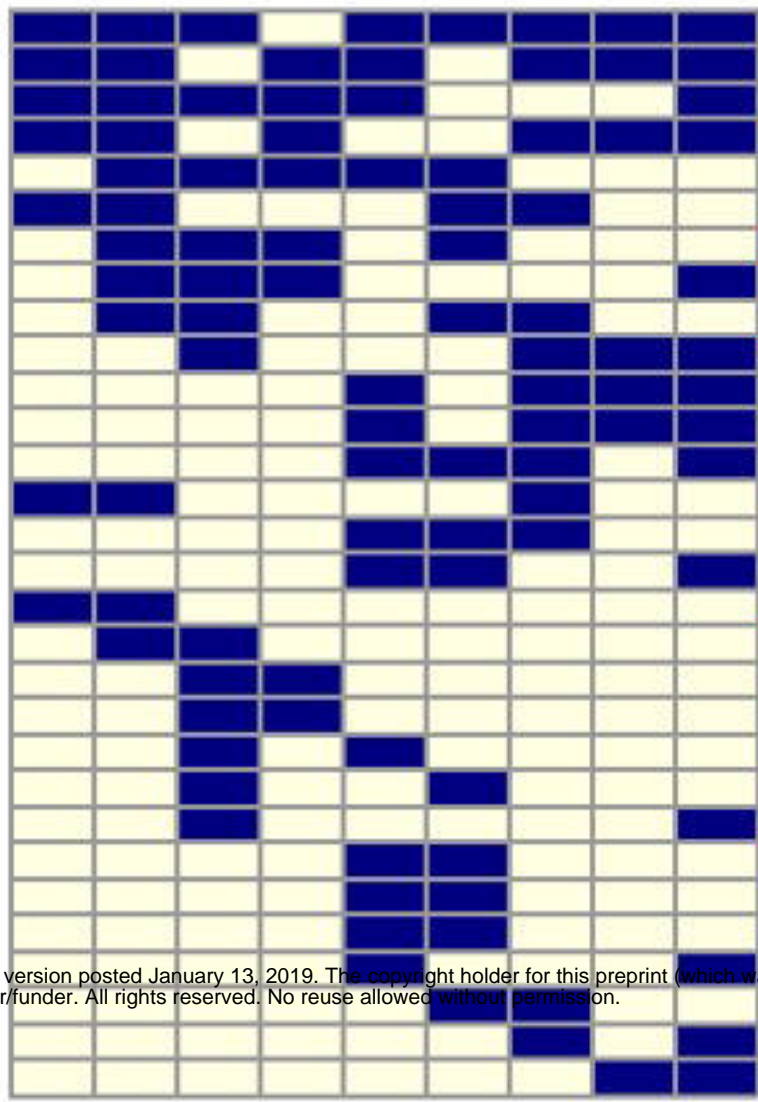


# Generalists (



Halomonas sp.  
Pelomonas sp.  
Sediminibacterium sp.  
Shewanella sp.

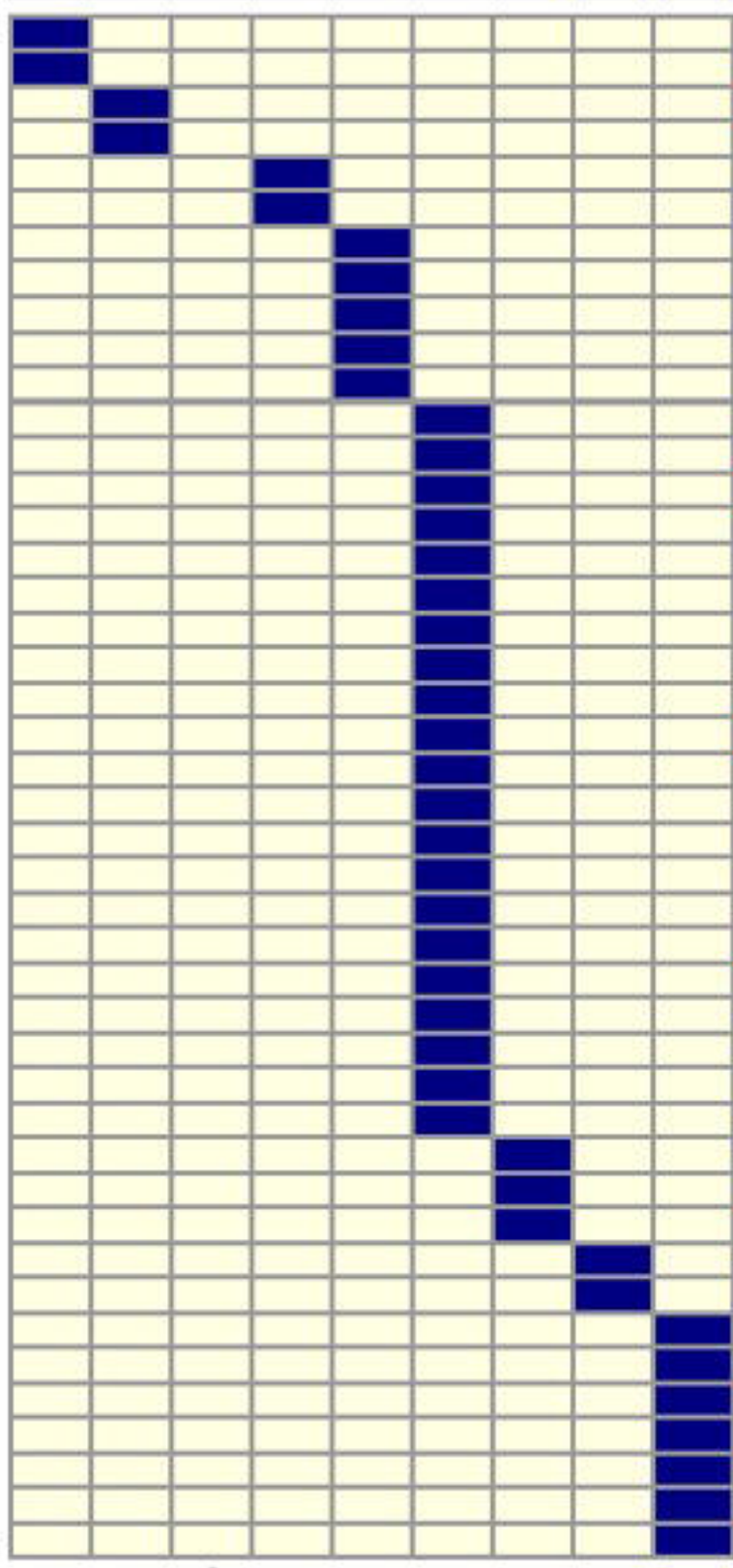
# Intermediate



Algiphilus sp.  
Ferribacterium sp.  
Brevundimonas sp.  
Phenylobacterium sp.\_1  
Zoogloea sp.  
Flectobacillus sp.  
Bosea sp.  
Curvibacter sp.  
Terrimonas sp. 1  
Methylophilus sp.  
Reyranella sp.\_1  
Rhodovulum sp.  
Tabrizicola sp.  
Myxococcaceae sp.  
Fluviicola sp.  
Parachlamydia sp.  
Caulobacter sp. 1  
Rubricoccus sp.  
Acinetobacter sp.  
Hydrothalea sp.  
Legionella sp.\_1  
Reyranella sp.\_2  
Pseudacidovorax sp.  
Azospirillum sp.  
Limisphaera sp.  
unknown1  
Methylibium sp.  
unknown2  
Sphingorhabdus sp.  
unknown3

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# Specialists



Arcicella sp.  
Sphingomonas sp. 1  
Caulobacter sp. 2  
unknown4  
Azospira sp.  
Duganella sp.  
Diplosphaera sp.  
Gracilibacter sp.  
Legionella sp.\_2  
Treponema sp.  
unknown5  
Armatimonas sp.  
Devosia sp.  
Emticicia sp.  
unknown6  
Legionella sp.\_3  
Lewinella sp.  
Litorilinea sp.  
Paludibaculum sp.  
Pedobacter sp. 1  
Pedobacter sp. 2  
Planctomyces sp.\_1  
Planctomyces sp.\_2  
Planctomyces sp.\_3  
Prostheco bacter sp.  
Runella sp.  
Terrimonas sp. 2  
Zavarzinella sp.  
unknown7  
unknown8  
unknown9  
unknown10  
Opitutus sp.  
Sphingomonas sp. 2  
unknown11  
Azoarcus sp.  
Hydrogenophaga sp.  
Albidiferax sp.  
Hydrocarboniphaga sp.  
Legionella sp. 4  
Novosphingobium sp.  
Phenylobacterium sp.\_2  
Sphingomonas sp. 3  
unknown12

Glucose  
Acetate  
Benzoate  
Oleic acid  
Cell lysate  
Sediment NOM  
Cellulose  
Mixed vitamins  
Control