

1 **Bacterially mediated removal of phosphorus**
2 **and cycling of nitrate and sulfate in the waste**
3 **stream of a “zero-discharge” recirculating**
4 **mariculture system**

5

6 **Running head: P, N and S cycling**

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22 **Abstract**

23 Simultaneous removal of nitrogen and phosphorus by microbial biofilters has been
24 used in a variety of water treatment systems including treatment systems in
25 aquaculture. In this study, phosphorus, nitrate and sulfate cycling in the anaerobic
26 loop of a zero-discharge, recirculating mariculture system was investigated using
27 detailed geochemical measurements in the sludge layer of the digestion basin. High
28 concentrations of nitrate and sulfate, circulating in the overlying water (~15 mM),
29 were removed by microbial respiration in the sludge resulting in a sulfide
30 accumulation of up to 3 mM. Modelling of the observed S and O isotopic ratios in the
31 surface sludge suggested that, with time, major respiration processes shifted from
32 heterotrophic nitrate and sulfate reduction to autotrophic nitrate reduction. The much
33 higher inorganic P content of the sludge relative to the fish feces is attributed to
34 conversion of organic P to authigenic apatite. This conclusion is supported by: (a) X-
35 ray diffraction analyses, which pointed to an accumulation of a calcium phosphate
36 mineral phase that was different from P phases found in the feces, (b) the calculation
37 that the pore waters of the sludge were highly oversaturated with respect to
38 hydroxyapatite (saturation index = 4.87) and (c) there was a decrease in phosphate
39 (and in the Ca/Na molar ratio) in the pore waters simultaneous with an increase in
40 ammonia showing there had to be an additional P removal process at the same time
41 as the heterotrophic breakdown of organic matter.

42

43 Keywords: aquaculture; anaerobic sludge; phosphorus removal; denitrification; apatite
44 formation; sulfur cycling.

45 **1. Introduction**

46

47 Fish cages, a widely used industrial mariculture technology, typically discharge up to
48 80% of the nitrogen and phosphorus that is supplied in the feed into the environment
49 (Naylor et al., 1998; van Rijn, 2013). Land based mariculture offers more control of
50 the waste, but is often limited by the shortage of coastal sites and the cost of inland
51 pumping of seawater and its discharge. The “Zero-Discharge System” (ZDS) is a
52 recently developed sustainable mariculture system (Gelfand et al., 2003) which uses
53 natural microbial processes to control water quality (Cytryn et al., 2003; Gelfand et
54 al., 2003; Neori et al., 2007). The system operates in a completely sealed way,
55 meaning that only a small amount of freshwater is used to replace losses by
56 evaporation. There is no continuous or even intermittent discharge of aqueous
57 effluent to the environment as exists in other mariculture systems. Although the
58 advantages of ZDS mariculture systems in terms of waste output are clear, the
59 mechanisms behind the nitrogen, sulfur and phosphorus cycling in such systems are
60 not well understood.

61 The ZDS consists of two water treatment loops (Fig. 1). The aerobic loop
62 converts toxic ammonia produced by fish to nitrate by means of a trickling biofilter. In
63 the second loop, an anaerobic loop, consisting of a digestion basin (DB) and
64 fluidized bed reactor, particulate waste organic matter (principally fish feces) and
65 other nutrients are metabolized to environmentally harmless forms. Previous studies
66 on this and similar systems revealed that the major processes affecting the overall
67 water quality are nitrification in the aerobic treatment loop and bacterial breakdown
68 of organic matter by processes including heterotrophic nitrate and sulfate reduction
69 as well as autotrophic nitrate reduction coupled to sulfide oxidation in the DB and

70 fluidized bed reactor (Gelfand et al., 2003; Cytryn et al., 2005; Neori et al., 2007;
71 Sher et al., 2008; Schneider et al., 2011). However the relative contribution of these
72 anaerobic bacterial processes was not known. Around 70% of the C and N supplied
73 is lost as carbon dioxide and gaseous nitrogen species, presumed to be the result of
74 heterotrophic bacterial respiration (Neori et al., 2007). Of the phosphorus supplied
75 with the fish feed, 21% is taken up for fish growth. Only 5% of the remaining
76 phosphorus accumulates in the water column while the rest is present as solid and
77 pore water phosphorus, mainly in the DB sludge accumulating in the anaerobic
78 treatment loop. It was not known in what form this P accumulates in the sludge nor
79 what processes are controlling this accumulation.

80 Simultaneous removal of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) by microbial
81 biofilters has been used in a variety of water treatment systems to treat nutrient-rich
82 waste streams. These include systems that use alternating aerobic-anaerobic
83 conditions to trap phosphate as polyphosphate under aerobic (van Loosdrecht et al.,
84 1997) or denitrifying conditions (van Loosdrecht et al., 1998) and release it in a
85 controlled way during the anaerobic cycle. The DB of the ZDS system has free
86 oxygen in the overlying water while the sludge itself is anaerobic with the precise
87 location of the redox boundary depending on the balance of recycling processes
88 within the system. In the DB examined in this study, N and P were found to be
89 simultaneously removed from the waste stream by the accumulation of P in
90 denitrifying organisms under entirely anoxic conditions (Barak and van Rijn, 2000a,
91 2000b; Barak et al., 2003; Neori et al., 2007).

92 Similar microbial processes to those in the digestion basin, may occur in
93 natural marine systems particularly in sediments underneath the upwelling regions of
94 the world such as the Benguela current off Namibia and off Oman in the Arabian

95 Sea. These locations have high concentrations of organic matter in the sediment (up
96 to 40%), much of which is labile causing high rates of heterotrophic bacterial activity
97 including sulfate reduction and methane production (Schulz et al., 1999).
98 Phosphorite (diagenetic apatite) nodules often form in the sediments beneath these
99 upwelling regions. Two processes have been suggested for this apatite formation.
100 Schenau et al. (2000) suggested that diagenic apatite was formed in pore waters
101 where phosphate released by heterotrophic respiration of organic matter created
102 high enough phosphate concentrations to overcome the kinetic barrier to apatite
103 formation (Van Cappellen and Berner, 1991). More recently, an alternative process
104 has been suggested in which bacteria, particularly sulfide oxidizing bacteria,
105 accumulate polyphosphate, which is then rapidly converted into diagenetic apatite
106 (Goldhammer et al., 2010). Both processes represent a shunt of P from its dissolved
107 form into bacterial biofilms, which is subsequently converted into mineral apatite.

108 This study examines the types and location of processes that control nitrate,
109 sulfate and phosphorus cycling within the sludge of the anaerobic loop in the ZDS
110 system. The major microbial transformations in the DB were determined using
111 detailed geochemical measurements of the depth distribution of relevant
112 geochemical parameters and their stable isotope composition in the DB sludge layer
113 and the overlying water. Detailed measurements of P in the sludge, pore and
114 overlying waters were made using geochemical and mineralogical methods to
115 determine the P speciation and its changes with depth. The identified P cycling
116 processes are compared and contrasted with similar processes in natural and
117 engineered systems.

118

119

120 **2. Material and Methods**

121

122 **2.1. System description**

123

124 The zero discharge system (ZDS) in this study was an enlarged version of the
125 system previously described in detail by Gelfand et al. (2003). Briefly, the system
126 comprised a fish basin (5 m³) stocked with the gilthead seabream (*Sparus aurata*)
127 from which water was circulated through aerobic and anaerobic treatment
128 compartments (Fig. 1). The aerobic compartment consisted of a trickling filter with a
129 volume of 8 m³ and a surface area of 1,920 m². Water from the trickling filter was
130 collected in a trickling filter basin (3m³) which was situated directly underneath the
131 trickling filter. Surface water from the fish basin was circulated through the aerobic
132 compartment at a rate of 10 m³h⁻¹. The digestion basin (DB, gross volume: 5.4 m³)
133 was the main part of the anaerobic treatment compartment. Water from the bottom of
134 the fish basin was drained continuously (0.8 m³h⁻¹) into the DB. Effluent water from
135 the DB was recirculated (0.8 m³h⁻¹) through a fluidized bed reactor (FBR, volume: 13
136 L) before being returned to the Intermediate Collection Basin. The FBR removes any
137 sulfide or other reduced potentially toxic compounds by microbial oxidation before
138 they reach the fish tank. The DB, with a total surface area of 3.64 m² (2.6 m length;
139 1.4 m width), contained a partition in the middle of the basin causing the incoming
140 water to flow over a total length of 5.2 m before leaving the basin. Total depth of
141 water and sludge in the DB was 80 cm and sludge thickness ranged between 30 and
142 50 cm (i.e. the water layer overlying the sludge varied in thickness from 30 to 50 cm).
143 As no continuous water exchange is required, the system can be operated away

144 from a seawater source. In the absence of such a source and to meet the desired
145 water salinity, solid sea salt (Red Sea pHarm Ltd, Israel) was initially added to the
146 DB to reach a final concentration of $\sim 8,500$ mgNa/L (i.e. 20 ± 2 ppt) in the system
147 water. It was allowed to dissolve there and diffuse into the overlying water. Local
148 Rehovot tap water was periodically added to the system to compensate for
149 evaporative losses. The system was started in October 2011 with sludge already
150 present from previous operations of the ZDS over the past seven years. This was
151 done to avoid an unacceptably long induction period since we added small fish at
152 first and thus there was limited waste organic matter being supplied to the DB. On
153 October 31, 2010, 738 fish were stocked with an initial weight of 1.5 g and on
154 October 16, 2011, 668 fish were harvested with an average weight of 237.6 g. Feed
155 addition over this period was 241 kg. Hence, the feed conversion coefficient (i.e. total
156 feed addition divided by to the total fish weight gained) was 1.53

157

158 **2.2. In situ *sampling***

159

160 Water quality parameters sampled in the fish basin were recorded for a period of 360
161 days starting in October 2011. Oxygen and temperature were measured daily while
162 ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, phosphate, pH and alkalinity were analyzed weekly. The
163 sediment system was sampled when anaerobic conditions had been clearly
164 established in the DB sludge (based on removal of nitrate from the overlying water;
165 see Fig S1).

166 Core samples of sludge from the DB were taken four times from the same
167 location in the digestion basin (see Fig. 1) using a custom-built corer with a rubber
168 diaphragm to seal the bottom. These cores were used for subsequent solid and

169 macropore water analysis. Cores were taken during the morning of July 12th (pore
170 water chemistry and solid analyses), July 13th (for pH) and two cores for isotopic
171 analyses were taken on August 4th (Core A) and February 2nd, 2012 (core B). The
172 first collected core (July 12th, 2011) was taken back to the laboratory and frozen at -
173 20°C. After 24 hours the frozen core was partially thawed (~20 minutes) and sections
174 of 1 cm each were extruded from the bottom of the core and sliced off with a metal
175 saw. The largest part of the sludge disk was placed in a pre-weighed 50 ml
176 centrifuge tube. It was weighed (wet weight) and then centrifuged for 15 minutes at
177 3,500 rpm at 4°C. The supernatant pore waters were filtered through a 0.45 µm filter
178 for phosphate, ammonia and nitrate determination. A subsample was refrozen for
179 subsequent analysis. After thawing, a small known amount of acid was added to the
180 tubes. The acidified samples well mixed, weighed accurately so that the volume of
181 dilution by acid could be determined, and analysed by Inductively Coupled Plasma
182 Atomic Emission Spectroscopy (ICP-AES) for Na, Ca, Mg, P and S. A wet sludge
183 subsample was weighed for porosity determination and then frozen for subsequent
184 freeze-drying. The freeze-dried samples were used for all subsequent solid samples
185 chemical determinations (see below). A further subsample of each sludge disk was
186 placed immediately into a centrifuge tube containing 5% zinc acetate solution for
187 sulfide determination. In addition, in July, 2011, a sample of fish feces was taken
188 from several fish together with samples of the fish feed for analysis.

189

190 The core sampled on July 13th, 2011 for pH measurements was brought back
191 to the lab and sludge samples were siphoned off from the top of the core into a
192 beaker in which pH was measured at the ambient temperature (~26°C). In addition,
193 one sample from the overlying water was taken for pH measurement.

194 The two cores collected on August 4th, 2011 (Core A) and February 2nd, 2012
195 (Core B) were immediately frozen after sampling and transported to Leeds with dry
196 ice. In Leeds, the cores were extruded frozen, cut into the required depth intervals
197 for analysis, and trimmed. The ice formed from overlying water at the top of each
198 core was melted for analysis and sulfate recovery. Each sample was split into two
199 and each refrozen. One aliquot was weighed, dried at 110°C and reweighed to
200 determine water content. The other aliquot was placed frozen into a sealed
201 extraction cell and flushed with N₂. Pore-water components were extracted by
202 diffusional exchange (Bottrell et al., 2000; Spence et al., 2005) for chemical analysis
203 and recovery of sulfate as BaSO₄. Freezing of core may cause redistribution of
204 solutes during freezing; however the effects are minimized since the cores are sub-
205 sampled at a coarse resolution and completely thawed to extract solutes. Freezing
206 prevents both post-sampling oxidation of S species and physical disturbance/mixing
207 of the core during transport, each of which would introduce far greater artefacts.

208

209

210 ***2.3. Pore water and solid sludge determinations***

211

212 Pore water samples were determined for major cations and anions by ICP-AES and
213 ion chromatography. Samples used for analysis of cations were acidified with two
214 drops of HCl (37%). Deionized water was added to some of the samples to facilitate
215 the dissolution of any observed precipitate. Elemental concentrations were
216 measured using a Side-On-Plasma ICP-AES model 'ARCOS' (Spectro GmbH,
217 Germany). Samples for determination of nitrate, sulfate, chloride, and phosphate
218 were forced through Reverse Phase filters and through 0.25 µm membrane filters to

219 remove organic material. The above anions were determined using an ICS-3000 Ion
220 Chromatograph (Dionex Corporation, Sunnyvale, California), with an AS17 analytical
221 column, an AG17 guard column, and an ASRS-Ultra II Anion Micromembrane
222 Suppressor. Total ammonia (NH_3 , NH_4^+), from here on referred to as ammonia, was
223 determined with the salicylate-hypochlorite method as described by Bower and
224 Holm-Hansen (1980). Dissolved sulfide was analysed on samples fixed with ZnAc
225 with the methylene blue method of Cline (1969).

226 Freeze dried sludge samples, feed and fish feces were analyzed for P
227 speciation using the procedure of Aspila et al. (1976) to determine total P and
228 inorganic P (and hence by difference: organic P). In addition, adsorbed P was
229 determined using the first step of the SEDEX P speciation procedure of Ruttenberg
230 (1992) involving extraction by MgCl_2 . Extracted samples were determined for
231 phosphate using the molybdate blue reaction (Golterman et al., 1978). The standard
232 error (1s) of these analyses was adsorbed P 3% (n =12), inorganic P 8% (n=16) and
233 organic P 4% (n =16). An additional solid subsample of sludge was analyzed for
234 major elements on fused glass beads prepared from ignited powders using a sample
235 to flux ratio of 1:10 (Lithium tetraborate) on PANalytical XRF spectrometer at
236 University of Leicester, UK. Quantification of inorganic polyphosphate was
237 accomplished using a fluorometric technique based on the interaction of inorganic
238 polyphosphate with 4',6'-Diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) (Aschar-Sobbi et al.,
239 2008; Diaz and Ingall, 2010). DAPI is commonly used as a stain for nucleic acid but
240 will also bind to polyphosphate, which is then detected using a combination of
241 incident and observed wavelengths optimized for polyphosphate (Aschar-Sobbi et
242 al., 2008). Inorganic polyphosphate of at least 15 P atoms in size is quantified

243 independently of chain length to a detection limit of 0.5 μM (Diaz and Ingall, 2010).
244 Typical errors associated with this technique are $\pm 15\%$ (Diaz and Ingall, 2010).

245

246 For the isotope cores, after pore-water extraction, acid-volatile (AVS =
247 dissolved sulfides and solid monosulfides) and chromium reducible sulfur (CRS =
248 pyrite sulfur and elemental sulfur) were extracted from the solid phase and recovered
249 as a single CuS precipitate for isotopic analysis. The mass of S recovered was
250 determined titrimetrically (Newton et al., 1995). Residual sulfur in the solid phase is
251 presumed to be organic-bound S and was converted to BaSO_4 by Eschka fusion and
252 determined gravimetrically. In addition, the 'Red Sea salt' and Rehovot tap water
253 used to create half seawater conditions in the system were sampled. The Red Sea
254 salt was dissolved for chemical analysis and sulfate recovered as BaSO_4 for both S
255 and O isotopic analysis.

256 The oxygen isotopic composition of aqueous sulfate was determined on
257 BaSO_4 precipitates using the method described by McCarthy et al. (1998) and using
258 a VG SIRA 10 gas source isotope ratio mass spectrometer. Data are reported as
259 $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ in per mille (‰) relative to the Vienna Standard Mean Ocean Water (V-SMOW);
260 reproducibility (2 x standard error), estimated from replicate analyses of standards, is
261 0.3‰ or better. Sulfur extracts and fish feed samples were quantitatively converted
262 to SO_2 by combustion at 1,150°C in the presence of pure oxygen (N5.0) injected into
263 a stream of helium (CP grade). The combustion gases were quantitatively converted
264 to N_2 , CO_2 and SO_2 by passing them through tungstic oxide. Excess oxygen was
265 removed by reaction with hot copper wires at 850°C and water was removed in a
266 magnesium perchlorate or Sicapent trap. All solid reagents were sourced from
267 Elemental Microanalysis, UK, and all gases were sourced from BOC, UK. N_2

268 continued through the system unchecked, whilst CO₂ and SO₂ were removed from,
269 and re-injected into, the gas stream using temperature controlled
270 adsorption/desorption columns. The $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ was derived using the integrated mass 64
271 and 66 signals relative to those in a pulse of SO₂ reference gas (N3.0). These ratios
272 are calibrated to the international V-CDT scale using an internal laboratory barium
273 sulfate standard derived from seawater (SWS-3), which has been analysed against
274 the international standards NBS-127 (+20.3‰), NBS-123 (+17.01‰), IAEA S-1 (-
275 0.30‰) and IAEA S-3 (-32.06‰) and assigned a value of +20.3‰, and an inter-lab
276 chalcopyrite standard CP-1 assigned a value of -4.56‰. If samples were more ³⁴S
277 depleted than CP-1, the IAEA S-3 standard was used instead. The precision
278 obtained for repeat analyses of standard materials was generally better than 0.3‰
279 $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{REF}}$ (1 standard deviation).

280

281 **3. Results**

282

283 **3.1. Water analyses**

284

285 The water quality was determined weekly in the circulating water of the ZDS system
286 (Fig. S1). The detailed sampling took place on July 12th, when main water quality
287 parameters had stabilized and ammonia, phosphate, nitrate and nitrite values were
288 0.02 mM, 1.03 mM, 16.1 mM and 0.017 mM, respectively. The nitrate concentration
289 in the overlying water at the time of sampling (17.4 mM) was much higher than in the
290 surface sludge. There was a decrease in nitrate such that the nitrate concentration
291 below 20 cm was close to or below the practical limit of detection. The nitrate
292 decrease within the sludge can be explained by the fact that under anoxic conditions

293 nitrate is reduced by bacteria, which oxidise organic matter and other reduced
294 compounds.

295 Sulfate is also respired under anoxic conditions within the sludge. In order to
296 recognize biologically mediated changes in sulfate in the sludge, it was necessary to
297 compare its concentration to that of sodium since the former compound is found in
298 measurable amounts in the sea salt added to the system. There was a systematic
299 increase in Na observed with depth with values increasing from ~ 50% seawater
300 concentration at the surface to 4 times higher concentration at the base of the sludge
301 core (Fig. S2A). This increase was most probably caused by the specific manner in
302 which sea salt was added to the system prior to the experimental period. Salt was
303 added to the DB with a working volume of 2.9 m³ (approximately 25% of the total
304 water volume in the system). Although intended to completely dissolve in the total
305 system water, it appears that as a result of this mode of salt addition, relatively more
306 salt accumulated in the bottom layers of the DB. Despite the high porosity of the
307 sludge (0.95 in the top layers and decreasing to 0.85 at 35 cm depth), there was no
308 evidence of physical mixing (Fig. S2C). Sulfate decreased rapidly from a value of
309 60.1 (SO₄ mM/Na M) in the overlying water to 14.8 (SO₄ mM/Na M) at 2.5 cm depth
310 (Fig. 2A). The ratio continued to decrease with depth to a minimum value of 4.3 (SO₄
311 mM/Na M) at 14.5 cm and then increased to 43.9 (SO₄ mM/Na M) at the lowest point
312 sampled (33.5cm). A similar profile was obtained when (total dissolved sulfur minus
313 dissolved sulfide)/Na was plotted with depth (Fig. 2A). There was no measurable
314 sulfide in the overlying water; it increased to a maximum of 3.8 mM at 15.5 cm and
315 then decreased to a value of 1.1 mM at 34.5 cm (Fig. 2B).

316 In order to understand the diagenetic processes in the sludge, the
317 concentration of relevant chemical species and parameters were measured.

318 Phosphate and ammonia are commonly measured as the products of the
319 heterotrophic anaerobic respiration of organic matter. However, the concentration of
320 these chemical species depends on the sum of all diagenetic processes in the
321 sludge. Thus, the dissolved phosphate in the sludge depth profile (Fig. 3A) was
322 lower in the uppermost layers (1.12 mM) compared with the overlying water (1.4
323 mM) and decreased with depth to values of ~0.7 mM at 35 cm. By contrast,
324 ammonia (Fig. 3B) was much higher in the surface sludge compared with the
325 overlying water. The ammonia concentrations in the upper 20 cm were roughly
326 constant in the range of 13-15 mM, which then decreased to ~10 mM below 25 cm.

327 Further information about the nature of the diagenetic processes in the
328 sediment comes from measurements of pH. In the sludge, the pH increased from
329 6.35 in the overlying water to a maximum of 6.8 just below the sediment water
330 interface (SWI) and then decreased with depth to a value of 6.5 at the base of the
331 sludge (Fig. S2D).

332 The concentration ratios of Ca/Na and Mg/Na were determined to provide
333 information about the possible precipitation of inorganic P minerals in the sludge.
334 The molar ratio in the overlying waters (21.96) was within error the same molar ratio
335 of Ca/Na (mM/M) in normal seawater (Fig. S2B). The ratio increased just below the
336 sludge-water interface to 40.7 and then decreased with depth reaching values of ~5
337 at 35 cm. The Mg/Na (mM/M) remained essentially constant at 60-78 over the depth
338 profile analysed (not shown).

339

340 **3.2. Solid sludge phase**

341

342 The P speciation and content of the sludge was compared with feces (the major
343 input) and fish feed (a possible minor input) to characterise the transformations
344 which have occurred in the DB. The total P in the sludge varies from ~1,500
345 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ in the surface layers increasing to a maximum of 2,090 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ at 15.5
346 cm and decreasing to 1,100 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ at the base of the sludge (Fig. 4A). Inorganic
347 P was the major phase in the sludge and increased from surface values of 1,030
348 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ to >1,500 $\mu\text{moles/g}$ before decreasing to 1,120 $\mu\text{moles/g}$ at 35.5 cm. By
349 contrast, organic P was relatively constant over the upper 20 cm at ~400-500
350 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ and then decreased to <50 $\mu\text{moles/g}$ at the base of the sludge (Fig.
351 4A). The total P content of the fish feed (410 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$) was lower than the fish
352 feces (830 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$), which is the main source of particulate matter to the sludge.
353 In contrast to the sludge, the organic P content of the fish feces (465 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$)
354 was higher than its inorganic P content (260 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$; Figure 4a; Table S1). The
355 principal major element in the sludge was Ca, which increased from 2.3 mmolesCa/g
356 (9.3 wt%Ca) at the surface to 3.2-4.1 mmolesCa/g (12.8-16.4 wt%Ca) at depth
357 (Table S2). Other elements, which might bind with P (Fe and Al), were present only
358 in $\mu\text{moles/g}$ concentrations (Table S2).

359

360 *3.2.1. Sulfur mass balance*

361 Sulfur mass balance can be assessed in the cores used for S isotopic
362 determinations as concentrations were also measured (Table 1). Data are presented
363 as aqueous concentrations for dissolved species and corrected to concentrations in
364 total sludge for all species (assuming a linear transition between measured
365 porosities of 0.95 at core top and 0.85 at core base). As noted above, sulfate
366 concentrations decline with depth in the upper part of the core (14.2 mM in the

367 overlying water, 7.8 mM in the uppermost core, declining to a minimum of 0.7 mM at
368 ~20 cm depth). However, although sulfide concentrations increase over a similar
369 interval (0 mM in the overlying water, 0.4 mM in the uppermost core, reaching a
370 maximum of 3.5 mM at ~17 cm depth) they never match the losses in sulfate and
371 thus total dissolved S decreases with depth over this interval. This imbalance is
372 explained by the general increase in concentration of solid phase S species over the
373 same depth interval (from ~590 mmol S/L of sludge in the upper core to >1,000
374 mmol S/L of sludge in the deepest core; Table 1), as sulfide reacts with solid phase
375 components to produce new organic S and CRS species. Elemental S may be a
376 product of sulfide reoxidation (e.g. Jiang et al. 2009) and this is analyzed within the
377 CRS fraction.

378

379 **3.3. Stable Isotope ratios**

380 *3.3.1. Inputs to the system*

381 The 'Red Sea salt' used to make up the tank water contained sulfate with isotopic
382 compositions of $\delta^{34}\text{S} = -1.5\text{‰}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O} = 10.0\text{‰}$ (Fig. 5); this is not a typical marine
383 sulfate isotope composition as the sulfate is sourced from terrestrial sulfate deposits.
384 The local Rehovot tap water used to fill the tank contains 0.16 mM sulfate with
385 isotopic composition of $\delta^{34}\text{S} = 6.9\text{‰}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O} = 7.8\text{‰}$. As the circulating tank water
386 was made up to 50% seawater chloride concentration, the dissolved sulfate was
387 dominated by the added Red Sea salt. Fresh water resources (both groundwater and
388 river waters) in Israel typically have a narrow range of $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ between -4‰ and -6‰
389 (Gat and Dansgaard, 1972) and the tap water used should be in this range. The
390 other main source of S to the system was the fish food, which contains ~0.7 wt% S;

391 two different batches of food were analyzed and had slightly different $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ isotopic
392 compositions, 6.5‰ and 8.9‰ (Fig. 5).

393

394 *3.3.2. Solid phase sulfur isotopic composition*

395 The combined acid-volatile (AVS) and chromium reducible sulfur (CRS) content of
396 the sludge was similar in both cores and showed no systematic variation with depth,
397 ranging from 3.45 to 10.5 mg g⁻¹. Organic-S contents were lower (0.81 to 3.54 mg g⁻¹)
398 and again showed no strong depth trend (Table S3). Both forms of S in the sludge
399 show a similar and quite narrow range of S isotopic composition (AVS + CRS =
400 1.4‰ to 8.2‰; Org-S = 3.6‰ to 8.3‰, Fig. 5, Table S3) and no systematic variation
401 with depth. The S isotopic composition of pore-water sulfate was broadly similar in
402 both cores, particularly so in the upper part of each core (Fig. 5). The lowest $\delta^{34}\text{S}$
403 value occurred in the shallowest pore-water sample and was lighter than the sulfate
404 in the overlying water (7.3‰ vs. 8.8‰ in core A and 8.0‰ vs. 10.2‰ in core B,
405 differences of 1.5‰ and 2.2‰). Below this, sulfate $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ remained near constant with
406 depth down to 17 cm and had values closely similar to the sulfate in the overlying
407 water. Below 17 cm depth the two profiles diverged somewhat, though in general
408 there was a tendency to higher $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ in the lower part of the profiles. Sulfate $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ in
409 the shallowest pore-waters was lower than in the overlying water but initially
410 increased with depth in both profiles. In the deeper pore-waters there is more
411 variability in sulfate $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and Core A tended to more elevated values (>+10‰) while
412 core B tended to lighter values (~+2‰); it should be noted that SO_4/Cl was different
413 for the two cores in their deeper parts.

414

415 *3.3.3. Calculation of the amount of total P in the sludge and the fraction accumulated*
416 *during the present phase of pond operation*

417 The total sludge volume was calculated to be 960,000 cm³ based on a tank surface
418 area of 2.4 m² and a depth of sludge of 40 cm. With an average sludge porosity of
419 0.9, it could be calculated that the DB contained 96,000 cm³ of sediment particles.
420 Assuming a dry density of 1.4 g/cm³, this equals 134,400 g of sediment. Using 1,535
421 mmolP/g as the average total P content of the sediment, it is calculated that the
422 sludge contains 206 moles P. Our calculation of the total P supplied to the ZDS as
423 fish feed minus the fish growth during the present run (October 2010 until July 2011)
424 was 65 moles P. This figure assumes that the only location for P accumulation is the
425 DB and that there was no major residual P build up in the nitrifying filter or
426 elsewhere. As a result, this is a minimum estimate. Since P in the sludge cannot go
427 anywhere, this implies that there were 141 moles of P already in the sludge before
428 the system was started. The system had been operating for seven years
429 intermittently before the start of this run. Therefore we conclude that the sludge
430 before we started in October, 2010 was already a long term repository of P, built up
431 during previous cycles of the ZDS system operating in a similar way to the present
432 run.

433

434 *3.3.4. Phosphate minerals within the sludge*

435 The X-ray diffraction data of the freeze-dried but untreated core section and fish
436 feces samples revealed a high background signal (due to high organic matter
437 concentrations) with main peaks identifiable as calcite, fluorapatite and gypsum. The
438 fish feed sample contained the same phases but with higher proportions of apatite
439 and with additional calcium oxalates and hydroxyapatite (Fig. S3A). After the ashing

440 and washing all carbon phases (organic matter and calcite) as well as the highly
441 soluble gypsum were, as expected, absent from the scans (Fig. S3B). It is worth
442 noting that with XRD it was difficult to differentiate between the various, crystalline
443 forms of apatite (A) in these samples. However, a clear distinction between less
444 crystalline hydroxyapatite (HAP) and other Ca-P phases was observable but not
445 quantifiable due to the broadness of the peaks. Looking at the XRD scans of the
446 treated samples compared with the fish feces, which is the main source of organic
447 matter in the sludge, a clear difference can be seen in the nature of the Ca-P phases
448 present (Fig. S3B). There was a shift in the peak position for the apatite phases
449 (labeled A) to a lower angle and a decrease in peak height. The less crystalline HAP
450 peak also shifted to lower angles but increased in peak height and a new peak,
451 possibly assignable to Francolite (a carbonate rich form of fluor-apatite), appeared in
452 the sludge. Within the upper 13.5 cm of the sludge, the peaks for all Ca-P phases
453 remained relatively constant in both angle and relative magnitude. Between 19.5 cm
454 to 34.5 cm (data not shown) the peak locations remained constant though the
455 relative peak heights decreased somewhat. In none of the scans were there any
456 peaks that could be assigned to struvite.

457

458

459 **4. Discussion**

460

461 ***4.1 P and N dynamics***

462

463 High concentrations of nitrate in the water flowing over the DB sludge on July
464 12th (17.4 mM) compared to much lower concentration of nitrate just below the SWI

465 (0.6 mM; Fig. 3C) are consistent with intense microbial denitrification in the DB . In
466 addition to rapid and extensive denitrification, heterotrophic sulfate reduction caused
467 ~75% of the sulfate present in the overlying water to be reduced within the upper 2.5
468 cm of the sludge. This sulfate reduction resulted in an accumulation of free sulfide in
469 the pore waters up to a maximum of 3.8 mM at ~15 cm. Despite the build up of free
470 sulfide in surface layers of the sludge, no free sulfide was measured in the fish tank
471 or circulating water. Previous studies have shown that this was due to autotrophic
472 denitrification (especially in the fluidized bed reactor) and other sulfide oxidation
473 processes efficiently removing any sulfide, which might leak from the sludge (Cytryn
474 et al. 2005; Neori et al., 2007; Sher et al., 2008; Schwermer et al., 2010; Neori and
475 Mendola, 2012).

476 In this study, we have used measurements of stable isotopes of S and O
477 ($\delta^{34}\text{S}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$) in the solids and pore waters of the sludge tank to examine the
478 nature of the microbial processes in the DB. Water sampled from the system
479 (overlying water and pore water) contains sulfate that has significantly higher $\delta^{34}\text{S}$
480 than the sulfate initially added to the system (i.e. ~ 10‰ vs. -1.4‰). This results from
481 a combination of two effects: (1) during the operation of the system, fish feed with a
482 more elevated $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ has been constantly added and processing of this sulfur may
483 have added sulfate with higher $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ to the sulfate pool and (2) at the present time, S
484 accumulating in the solid phase (both as AVS+CRS and Org-S) has lower $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ than
485 the sulfate in the system (Fig. 5). If this solid phase pool has gradually accumulated
486 S with lower $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ than the contemporaneous sulfate, then this will have driven the
487 aqueous sulfate to progressively higher $\delta^{34}\text{S}$.

488 The $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ of pore-water sulfate in the upper 17 cm varies little from that of the
489 overlying water. However, the chemical data for pore-waters show large decreases

490 in SO_4/Cl in the upper parts of both cores, which would normally imply removal of
491 sulfate by microbial sulfate reduction. This process is usually accompanied by a
492 large sulfur isotope fractionation (e.g. Canfield 2001) with sulfide produced typically
493 20‰ to 45‰ depleted in ^{34}S compared to sulfate. However, in this particular reactor
494 this process seems to operate with much smaller fractionation. Firstly, there is only a
495 small offset between pore-water sulfate compositions and average solid phase
496 sulfide, with only ~5‰ depletion in ^{34}S in the sulfide product and secondly there is no
497 large systematic increase in sulfate $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ as SO_4/Cl falls in the upper parts of both
498 cores (data not shown but similar to the SO_4/Na profile (Fig 2A). However, the
499 sulfate in the pore-water is not inert, as there are large changes in sulfate $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ over
500 this interval in both profiles (Fig. 5). Rather, sulfide produced must be near-
501 quantitatively reoxidized to sulfate and there is little net conversion of sulfate to
502 reduced forms such as AVS, CRS or Org-S (e.g. Bottrell et al., 2009). However, as
503 sulfate is reduced and reoxidized the re-formed sulfate contains oxygen atoms from
504 different sources and with different $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ to the original sulfate. The fact that sulfate in
505 the shallowest pore-water has slightly lower $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ than the overlying water or deeper
506 pore-water indicates that production of sulfate by reoxidation of ^{34}S -depleted sulfide
507 dominates at this level. The $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of this sulfate is lower than the overlying waters (by
508 6.8‰ in Core A and 4.0‰ in Core B, Fig. 5). Such a shift to lower $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ in sulfate
509 rules out molecular oxygen as the oxidizing agent as it is highly ^{18}O enriched, but
510 rather indicates that the oxygen atoms incorporated into sulfate during sulfide
511 oxidation are derived from water molecules with negative $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ (McCarthy et al.,
512 1998; Bottrell and Tranter, 2002; Bottrell et al., 2009) and thus sulfide oxidation was
513 driven by an alternative electron acceptor, most likely nitrate, based on the chemical
514 profiles (Fig. 3C). Thus, it is concluded that in the upper layers of the DB there is

515 rapid heterotrophic sulfate reduction, which is approximately balanced by autotrophic
516 nitrate reduction. Heterotrophic nitrate reduction is a relatively lesser process. To test
517 the feasibility of such a scenario the system was investigated using a simple model
518 of the fate of S and N species.

519 The model considers the budgets of sulfur and nitrogen species in a system
520 where heterotrophic sulfate reduction (HSR), heterotrophic nitrate reduction (HNR)
521 and autotrophic nitrate reduction (ANR, using sulfide as an electron donor) may
522 occur. Starting compositions were those of the overlying water (15 mM sulfate, 15
523 mM nitrate and zero sulfide); reactions were modelled as first-order with respect to
524 these components. Concentration of organic substrate for heterotrophic respiration
525 was not considered to limit those reactions. The model describes the evolution of an
526 aliquot of pore-water as its composition is modified by these reactions. Model runs
527 were performed with different ratios of reaction rates, i.e. $R_{\text{HSR}}/R_{\text{HNR}}$ and $R_{\text{ANR}}/R_{\text{HNR}}$.
528 Because sulfate is a lower energy-yielding electron acceptor, under similar
529 conditions R_{HSR} is generally lower than R_{HNR} , so all runs were made with $R_{\text{HSR}}/R_{\text{HNR}}$
530 ≤ 1 . Experimental determination of the effect of sulfide on nitrate reducing systems
531 shows that $R_{\text{ANR}} > R_{\text{HNR}}$, with autotrophic activity often effectively eliminating
532 heterotrophic activity as long as sulfide is present (e.g. Sher et al., 2008; Shijie et al.,
533 2010), so all model runs were made with $R_{\text{ANR}}/R_{\text{HNR}} \geq 1$.

534 Model results are presented in Table 2. During most runs initially
535 heterotrophic NR dominated, but as sulfide concentration increased due to SR, rates
536 of autotrophic NR increased and became dominant (except in runs with very low
537 heterotrophic SR/heterotrophic NR where nitrate was consumed before autotrophic
538 NR became dominant). Where the rate of autotrophic NR is much greater than that
539 of heterotrophic NR, little nitrate is consumed by heterotrophic NR before autotrophic

540 NR becomes dominant and sulfide concentrations are low (and sulfate
541 concentrations remain high) until all nitrate is consumed. Thus, under many realistic
542 scenarios the system evolves such that SR is the dominant heterotrophic respiration
543 mechanism and the sulfide generated then accounts for the majority of NR via an
544 autotrophic pathway. This pattern is consistent with the observed chemistry and
545 stable isotope compositions that show that sulfate is cycled but not consumed in the
546 sludge over the interval where nitrate is consumed. Also shown in Table 2 are the
547 sulfide concentrations at which autotrophic NR becomes dominant; these are lower
548 than the observed concentrations in the sludge profile, indicating that ample sulfide
549 is available to drive autotrophic NR. Sulfide concentrations rise in the model runs
550 after nitrate concentrations fall, conditions similar to those observed deeper in the
551 sludge profile.

552

553 ***4.2. Sediment sludge as a long term sink for P***

554

555 The digestion basin is a bacterial bioreactor in which the sediment sludge is
556 predominantly a repository of organic rich fish feces from the fish basin. Inputs to the
557 DB are modified subsequently mainly by anaerobic bacterial processes with the
558 major bacterial transformations described above. Despite the high fraction of organic
559 P in the fish feces input most of the particulate P in the DB is not organic P but
560 inorganic P (Fig. 4A, Table S1). X-Ray diffraction data indicates that the P
561 accumulating in the DB is a mixture of crystalline apatite and poorly ordered
562 hydroxyapatite (Fig. S3). There was no evidence of struvite. The XRD data,
563 however, showed that the fish feed contained large amounts of crystalline apatite
564 and some hydroxyapatite (probably as ground up fish bone from the fishmeal; Fig.

565 S3A) besides oxalates and calcite. Part of this initial apatite probably survives
566 through the gut of the *Sparus aurata* and is excreted within the fish feces (Fig. S3B,
567 top XRD scan). We ask the question whether the apatite measured in the sludge is
568 simply the residue of accumulating apatite supplied externally alone or whether it is
569 also formed actively in the sludge by *in situ* processes. The sludge in the uppermost
570 layer represents most closely the (transformed) fresh organic matter input from the
571 fish tank. We assume initially that the particulate matter reaching the sludge surface
572 was 100% fish feces because of good evidence for this based on observations and
573 on the observed fish growth, i.e. that the fish ate essentially all the food they were
574 fed. The total P measured in the surface sludge was 1,520 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$, which is
575 higher in total concentration than either the fish feces (830 $\mu\text{moles/g}$) or the fish feed
576 (410 $\mu\text{moles/g}$; Table S1). It is known that there is significant denitrification and loss
577 of C by CO_2 and/or methane production in the ZDS system. Neori et al. (2007)
578 estimated that over a period of 500 days approximately 70% by weight was lost from
579 the system as gaseous nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The calculated loss of weight in
580 the conversion of 832 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ to 1,520 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ is 46% assuming that the total
581 P remained constant. This change in concentration for a period of 220 days was
582 reasonable based on the results of Neori et al. (2007) for a similar ZDS system. If we
583 assume that all of the change in measured inorganic P was only due to this loss of
584 total mass then the inorganic phase should be 480 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ compared with the
585 measured inorganic P (1035 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$) and the organic P was calculated to be 850
586 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ compared with the measured 480 $\mu\text{molesP/g}$ of organic P. Thus, in
587 addition to any changes in concentration caused by loss of mass, there also had to
588 be a major and rapid conversion of organic P to inorganic P.

589 The sludge tank is a location of active heterotrophic nitrate and sulfate
590 reduction. There was major accumulation of ammonia and phosphate in the pore
591 waters (Fig. 3), an increase in pH (Fig. S2D) as well as rapid reduction in nitrate and
592 sulfate, which are all characteristic of heterotrophic bacterial reduction. However in
593 the upper 10 cm, which is the zone of most active heterotrophic reduction, while
594 ammonia increased with depth by ~ 2 mM, phosphate decreased by ~0.2 mM. This
595 requires a process within the upper layers of the sludge, which caused a net removal
596 of phosphate while ammonia (and presumably phosphate) was being released by
597 heterotrophic reduction. Phosphate could be removed by the formation of
598 polyphosphate granules in denitrifying and other reducing bacteria. However while
599 polyphosphate was present in the upper 10 cm, it was only found in $\mu\text{moles/g}$
600 amounts (Fig. 4B) which was not sufficient to explain this major removal of
601 phosphate unless this represented a transient phase. A more likely explanation is the
602 formation of mineral apatite. Struvite, another possible mineral that could be
603 removed in such systems, would require the removal of both ammonia and
604 phosphate simultaneously. Our high-resolution X-Ray diffraction scans over the 50-
605 $55^\circ 2\theta$ range (which is a location where apatite can clearly be separated from
606 hydroxyapatite and other Ca-P phases) showed the presence of hydroxyapatite
607 peaks in both the fish feces and the sludge. However, as described above, there was
608 a clear change in the nature and proportions of the crystalline and poorly ordered
609 Ca-P phases with depth (Fig. S3B) indicating that new, secondary Ca-P phases –
610 most likely additional hydroxyapatite and maybe francolite have formed. It needs to
611 be noted that the input of crystalline apatite from the fish feces and possibly also the
612 fish feed makes a quantitative determination of these changes difficult.

613 Using our measured pore water concentrations, the degree of saturation of
614 the pore waters for possible insoluble chemical species was carried out using
615 PHREEQC thermodynamic software in the upper layers of the sediment sludge. In
616 addition to measured pore water species (Fig. 3), we assumed a fluoride
617 concentration of half that in normal seawater (based on the Na and Cl concentrations
618 which are similar conservative elements and are measured as half seawater
619 concentration). The bicarbonate concentration was obtained from DIC
620 measurements on gel probes corrected for incomplete back equilibration assuming
621 that Cl and bicarbonate were equally affected. The calculation showed that the pore
622 waters were supersaturated with respect to hydroxyapatite, aragonite, calcite and
623 dolomite but not with respect to anhydrite, gypsum or struvite (Table 3).

624 Over the same depth interval (0-17 cm) as phosphate decreases by 0.2 mM
625 (Fig. 3), dissolved Ca decreases by 6 mM and the Ca/Na ratio decreased from 40 to
626 ~10 (Fig. S2B) while solid phase Ca increased from 2.33 mmolCa/g to 4.24
627 mmolCa/g (Table S2) and inorganic carbonate-C increased by a factor of 2 (Fig.
628 S2E). This means that ~15% of the Ca in the sludge is CaCO_3 (assuming that all
629 inorganic C is CaCO_3) and the remainder is apatite. Taken together, these data
630 suggest that these upper layers of the sludge are the site of active precipitation of
631 both hydroxyapatite and calcite from the pore waters of the sludge. The precipitation
632 of hydroxyapatite is facilitated in this system because not only were the pore waters
633 highly supersaturated with respect to apatite but also there were available apatite
634 nuclei in the shape of the ground up fish bones added via the fish food. Attempts to
635 observe directly the nature of the apatite formation process using XANES
636 measurements using synchrotron were not successful mainly because there were

637 simply too many phosphorus-rich granules in the observed field to observe the
638 necessary subtle changes in peak shapes predicted.

639 Our data also shows that in the longer term there was a conversion of organic
640 P to apatite within the digestion basin. At the time of the start up of this particular
641 ZDS run, there was sludge in the DB, which was the residue from seven years of
642 pond operation in various different modes i.e. different masses and sizes of fish but
643 fundamentally still being operated as a ZDS system. This residual sludge was
644 expected to contain the end products of ZDS processes. The observed depth profile
645 of the sludge showed an increase in inorganic P (i.e. apatite P) with depth and a
646 synchronous decrease in the proportion of organic P within the system particularly in
647 the lower layers (> 25 cm) where the almost all of the organic P appears to have
648 converted in a process analogous to the sink switching observed in recent marine
649 sediments (Ruttenberg and Berner, 1993) into inorganic apatite.

650

651 ***4.3. Synthesis comparing processes in DB to other systems***

652

653 The ZDS was designed to use natural bacterial processes found in marine systems,
654 particularly in marine sediments, to control water quality conditions over long periods
655 of time (several months to years). These processes, which include nitrification, oxic
656 respiration, heterotrophic nitrate and sulfate reduction and autotrophic nitrate
657 reduction by sulphide, are balanced in such a way as to keep the water quality
658 conditions in the fishpond within levels acceptable for fish growth. Our results here
659 suggest that the closest natural analogue for P cycling processes in the DB are the
660 sediments beneath modern upwelling regions such as off Namibia and in the Arabian
661 Sea (e.g. Goldammer et al., 2011; Schenau et al., 2000). These are sediments with

662 very high levels of organic matter (up to 40% OM). They are locations with intense
663 rates of heterotrophic bacterial respiration including both oxic processes and sulfate
664 reduction. The sediments underneath upwelling currents are the major areas for
665 phosphorite (apatite) formation. Schenau et al. (2000) observed high rates of
666 authigenic apatite formation, which they suggest, are induced by high rates of
667 organic matter degradation producing phosphate in the pore waters. They also
668 suggest that dissolution of fish debris acts as an additional source of dissolved
669 phosphate. The high concentration of dissolved phosphate together with normal
670 levels of calcium in the pore waters result in sufficient over saturation with respect to
671 apatite (francolite) precipitation to overcome the kinetic barrier known to exist in less
672 organic rich 'normal' marine sediments (van Cappellen and Berner, 1991).

673 An alternative mechanism for apatite precipitation has been suggested by
674 Goldhammer et al. (2010; 2011) who suggest that polyphosphate present in sulfide
675 oxidizing bacteria is rapidly converted to apatite. This process occurs under anoxic
676 conditions and they calculate that the rate of phosphate to apatite conversion by this
677 process exceeds the rate of phosphorus release during organic matter
678 mineralisation. It is possible that both of these processes are occurring in the DB
679 since there is direct evidence of both heterotrophic breakdown of organic matter and
680 extensive oxidation of sulfide and the presence of polyphosphate in the upper most
681 active layers of the DB. It is however not possible with the data collected in this study
682 to determine which of these processes dominate in the formation of apatite.

683 The phosphate that is removed from the recirculating system and
684 accumulates in the DB is mineral apatite. Apatite is the form of phosphate, which is
685 most commonly used as the primary mineral for commercial phosphate applications.
686 In a world with dwindling exploitable reserves of phosphorite and other phosphate

687 minerals it is important to recycle phosphorus. Since apatite is acid soluble, the
688 conversion of solid apatite from the sludge into dissolved P would be relatively easy.
689 Thus the P accumulated in this system could be easily recovered and converted into
690 a form of phosphorus that could be used in such applications as fertilizers.

691

692 **Acknowledgements**

693

694 We would like to thank David Ashley for his help and advice with many aspects of
695 the chemical analyses carried out in this project and in particular for the inspirational
696 way in which he carried out sampling and analysis late into the night during the major
697 sampling trip in Israel. We also thank Amir Neori for his useful comments on the text.

698 This work was funded by a UK-Israel BIRAX grant (BY2/BIO/01) to JvR and MDK
699 and by a USA-Israel Binational Science Foundation grant (2008216) to JvR and EI.

700 LGB would also like to acknowledge part support for her work during this project
701 through a UK Natural Environment Research Council award (NE/C004566/1).

702

703

704 **Appendix A. Supplementary data**

705

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816 **Figure legends**

817 Figure 1. A diagram of the system as a whole including a more detailed diagram of
818 the digestion basin showing the location of the sludge sampling.

819 Figure 2. Pore water concentration of a) Sulfate/Na and {Total dissolved S
820 (measured by ICP) minus dissolved Sulfide} /Na concentration ratio
821 (mmolesS/moleNa) and b) Dissolved Sulfide (molesS/l) in the pore waters of the
822 sludge. Measured value for sulfate/Na molar ratio in the overlying water (OW) is
823 given. There was no sulfide detected in the overlying water.

824 Figure 3. Pore water nutrient concentrations of dissolved phosphate, ammonia and
825 nitrate vs depth together with corresponding values for these nutrients in the
826 overlying water. Note that the concentration of nitrate in the overlying water is 17.4
827 mM as noted in the data point description.

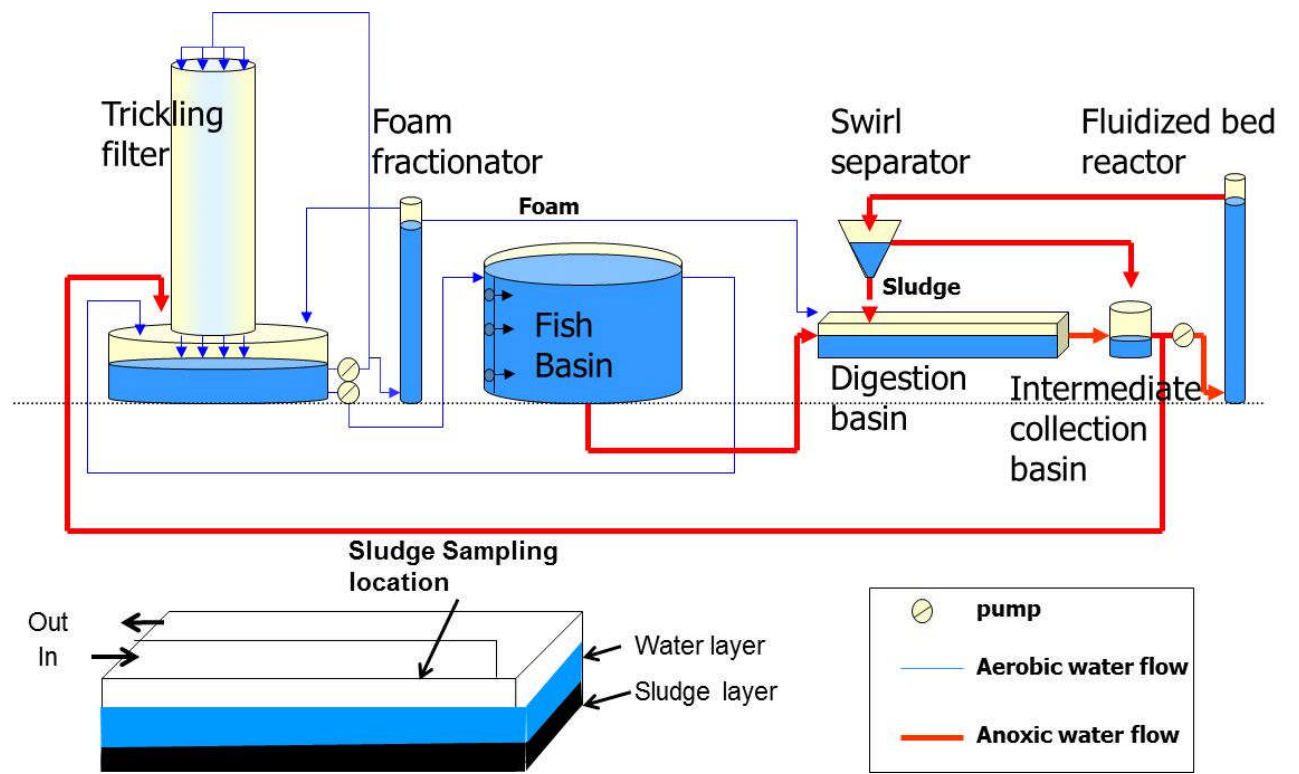
828 Figure 4. Phosphate in sludge: (A) Changes in P speciation with depth in sludge of
829 the sedimentation basin together with the P speciation of the fish feces which is the
830 main input of particulate matter to the digestion basin; (B) Polyphosphate
831 concentrations ($\mu\text{mole/g}$) with depth.

832 Figure 5. Depth profiles of $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of dissolved sulfate for two sludge cores
833 with depth. Also shown are $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of sulfate in the overlying waters and
834 values for input sources (Red Sea Salt (RSS) and tapwater). On the left hand
835 diagram the ranges depicted in boxes are for solid phase S species in the core; CRS
836 = chromium reducible sulfur (monosulfides + pyrite + elemental S), Org S = organic
837 sulfur; $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values are also plotted for fish feed.

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840 Figure 1:



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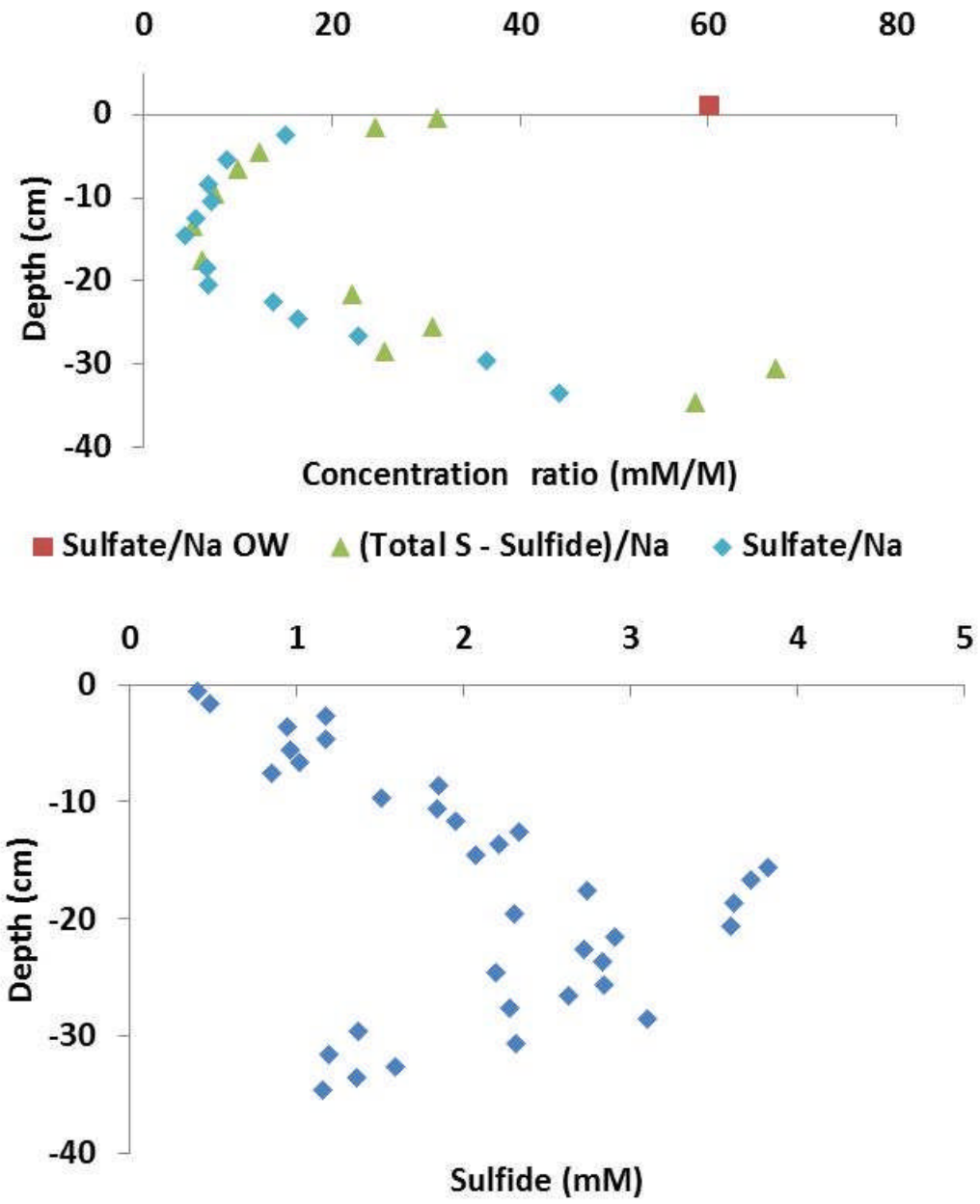
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851 Figure 2:

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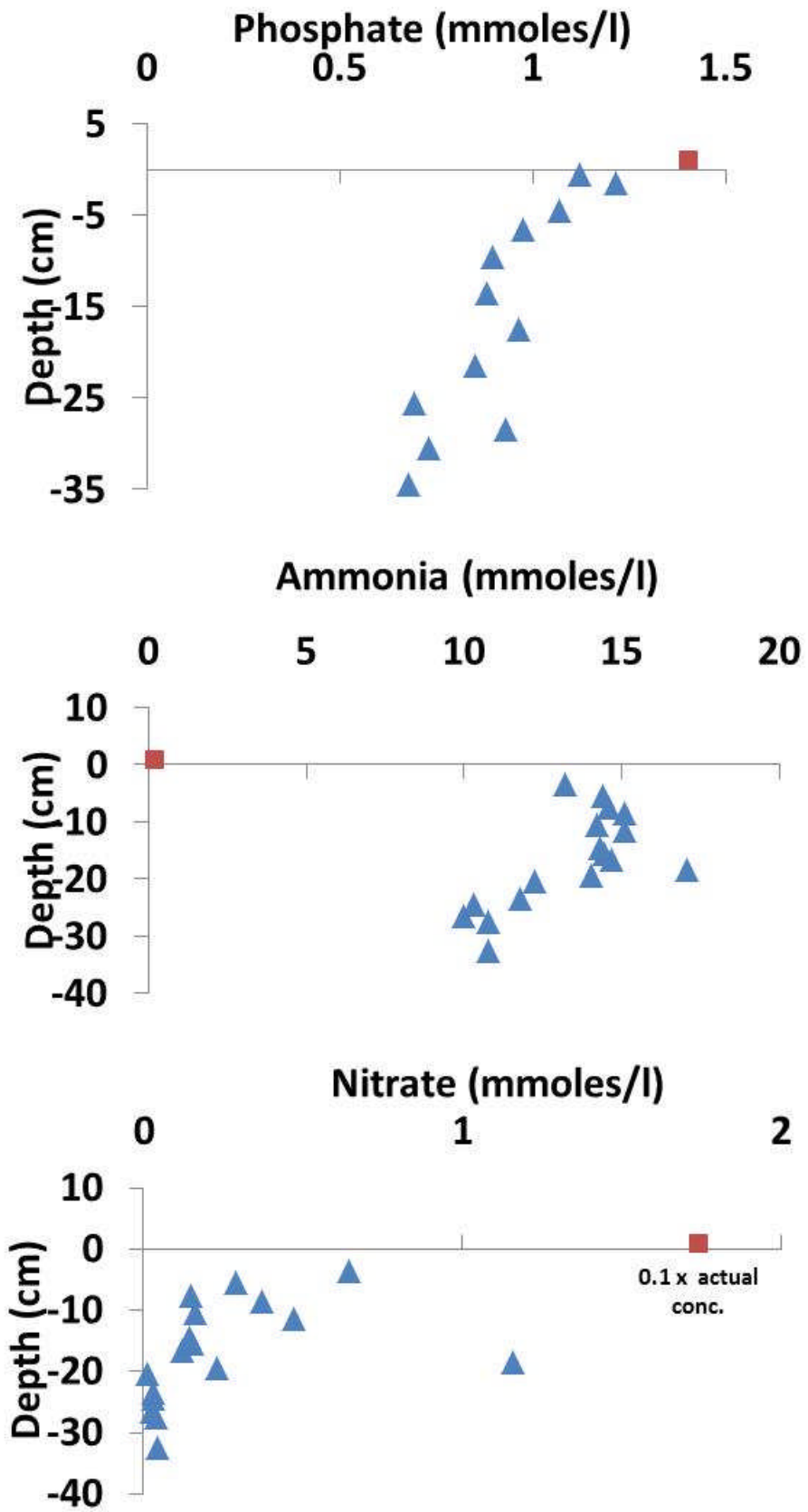


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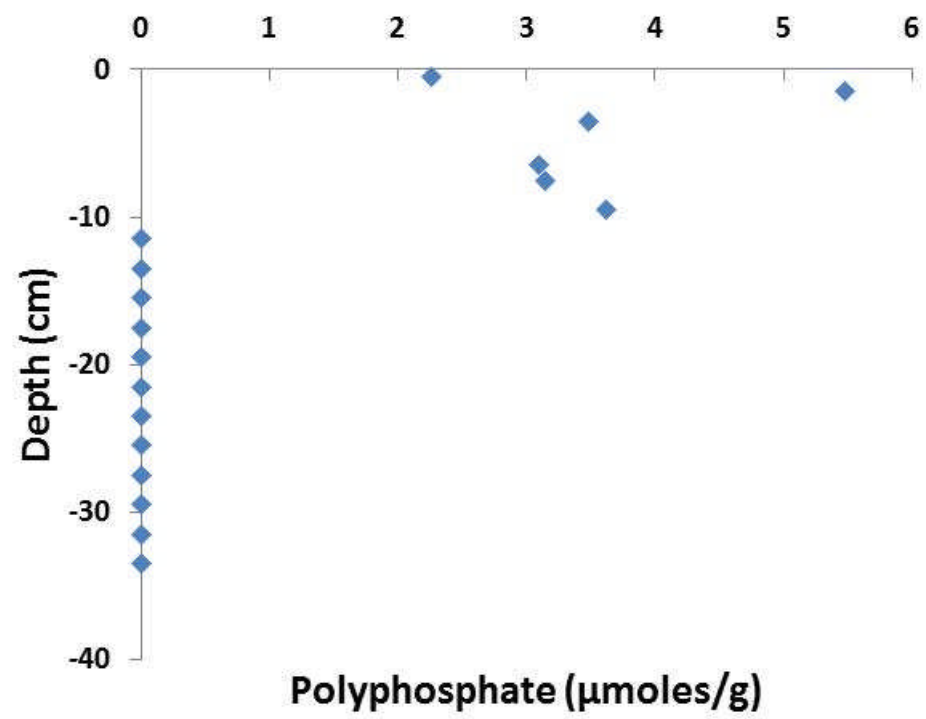
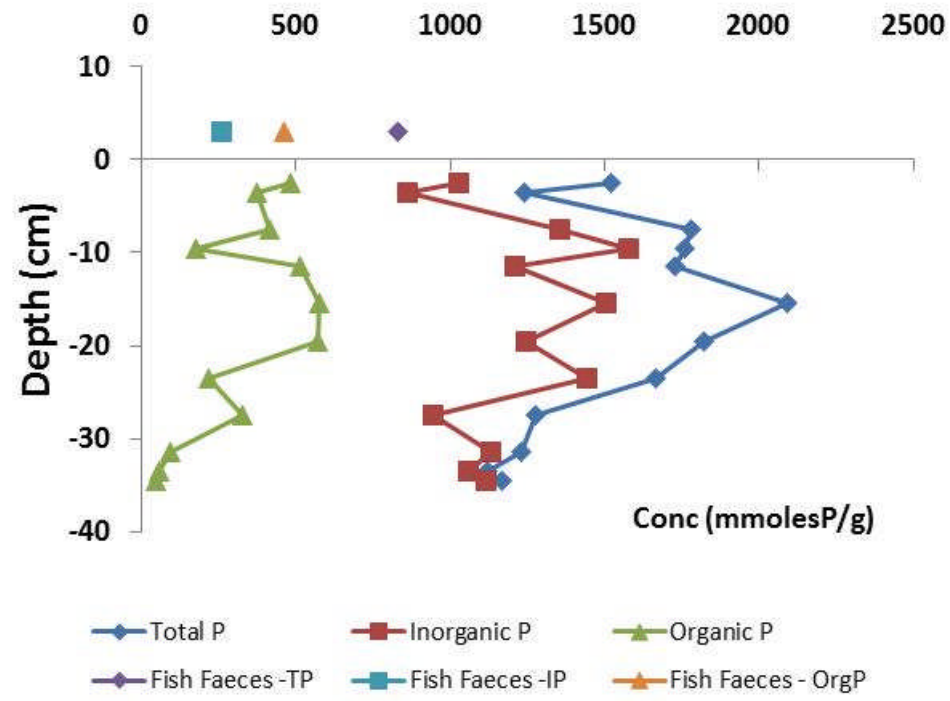
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Figure 3

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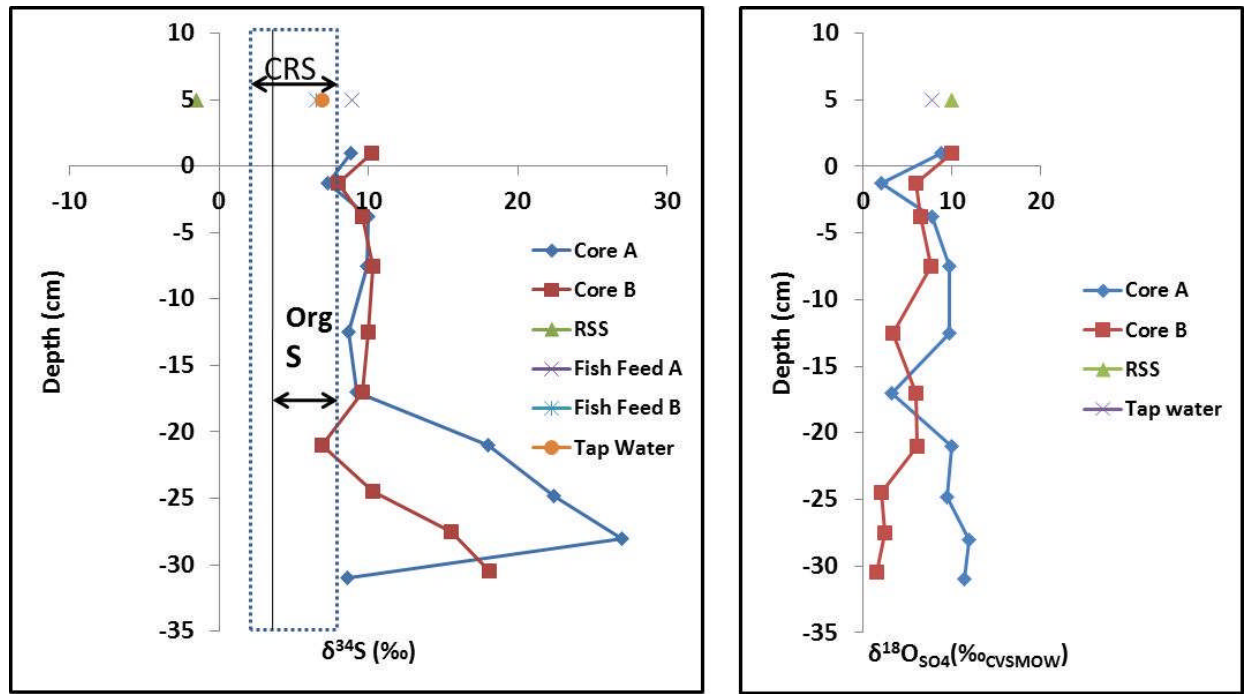


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860 Figure 4

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865 Figure 5

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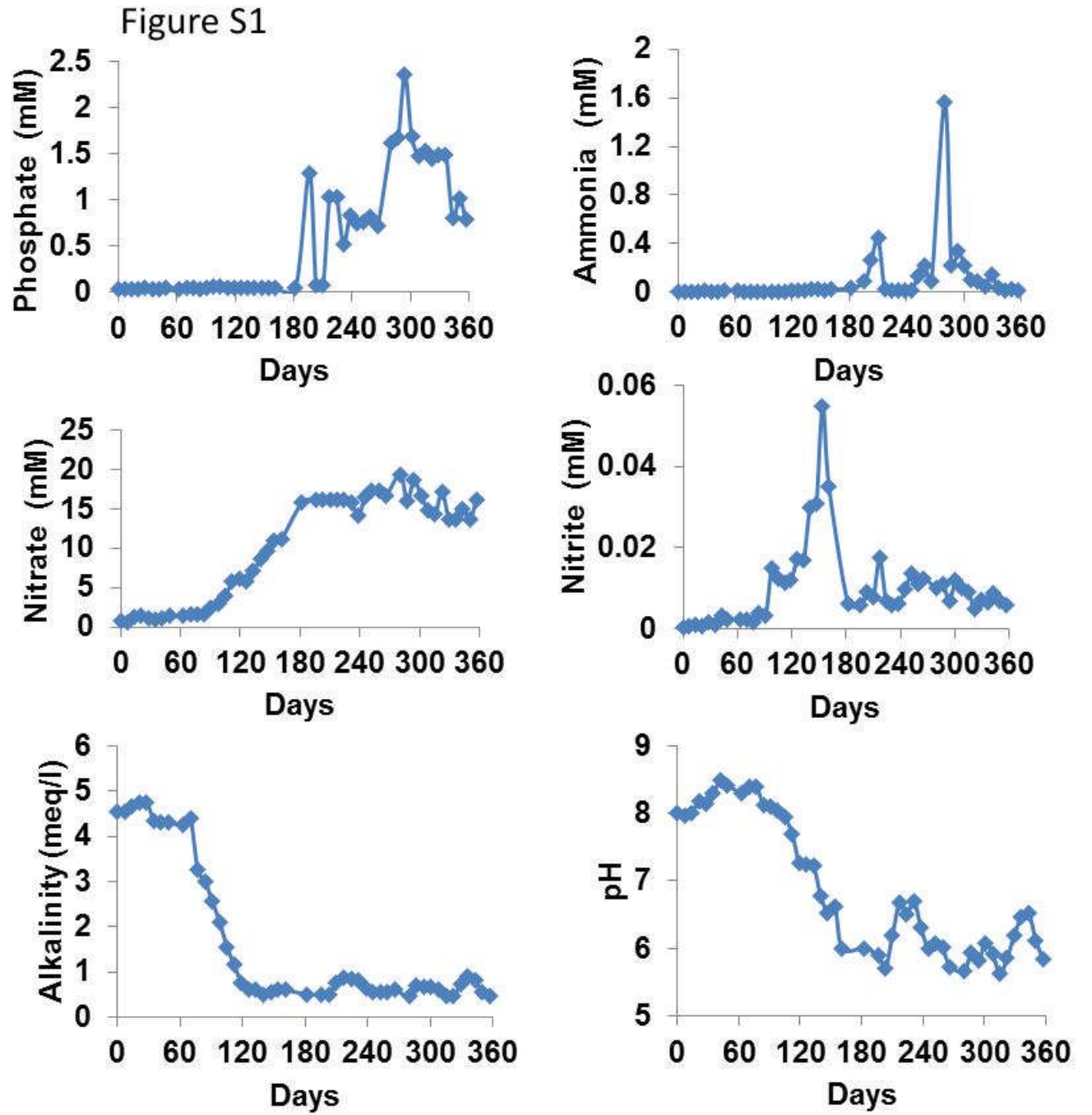
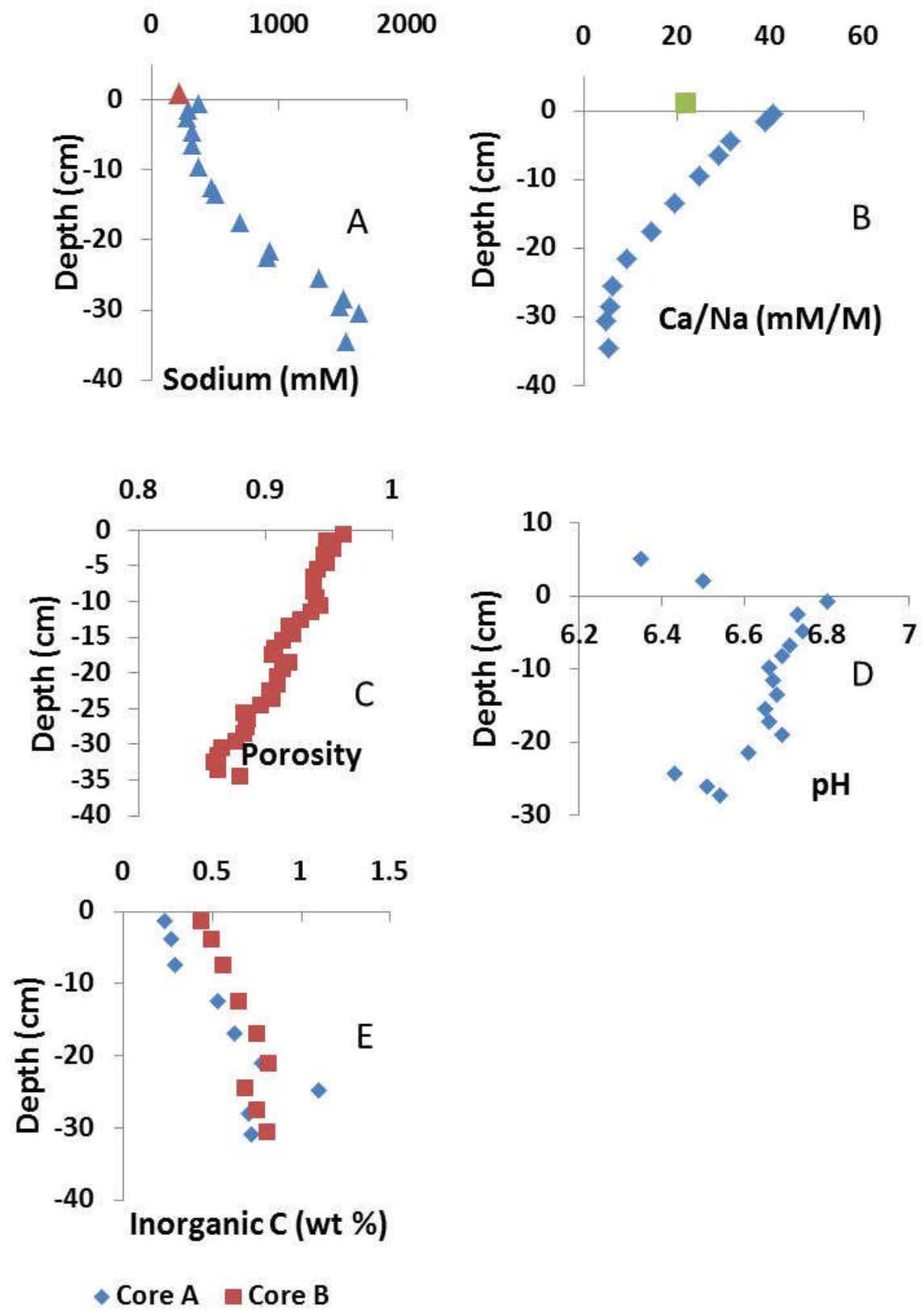
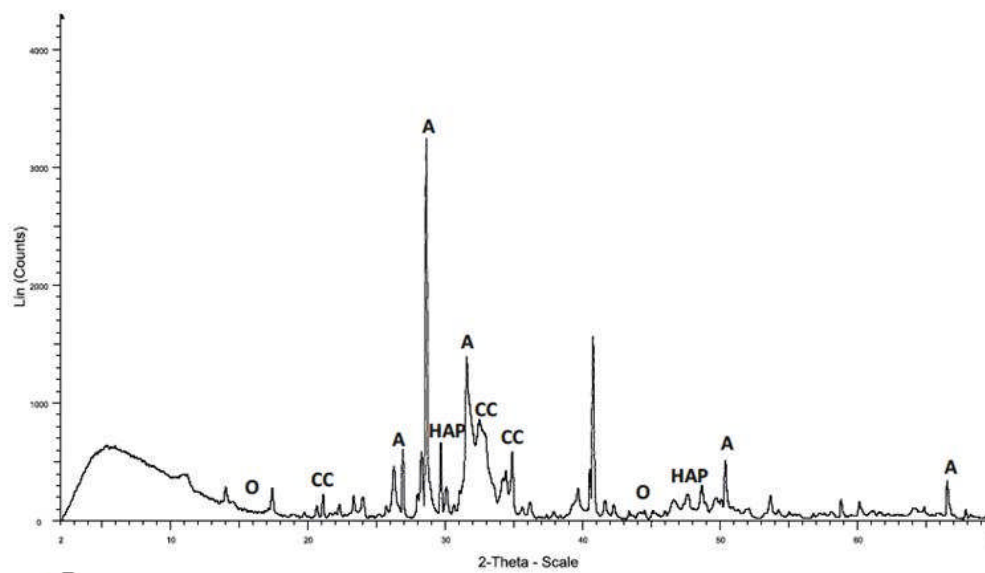


Figure S2



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Figure S3A



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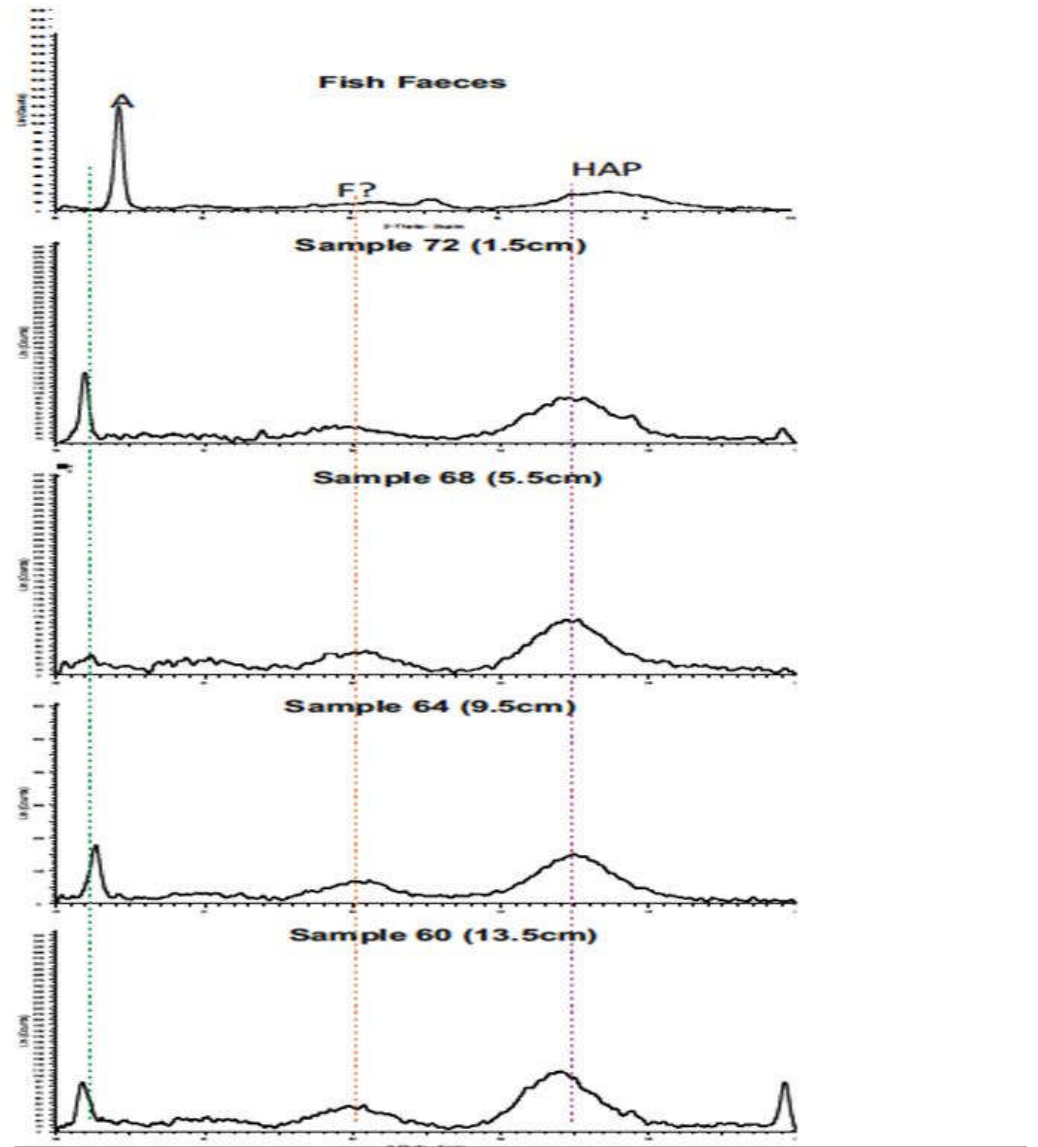
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Figure S3B



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