

1 **Bacterial community response to novel versus repeated disturbances**

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10 16S

11 **Abstract**

12 Disturbance response and recovery are an increasing focus in microbial ecology as
13 microbes may recovery from disturbance differently than macro communities. Past disturbances
14 can alter microbial community structure and disturbance response to subsequent disturbances
15 events, but it remains unclear if the same recovery patterns continue after long-term exposure to
16 stress. Here, we compare bacterial community composition in a community that experienced two
17 years of monthly salinity addition disturbances with a community that has not experience salinity
18 additions. We then track response and recovery to an additional salinity addition based on past
19 disturbance exposure. We tested the following hypotheses: 1) communities with a repeated
20 disturbance history will have different community composition than communities without a
21 disturbance history; 2) communities exposed to repeated disturbances will undergo a different
22 recovery trajectory than communities experiencing a novel disturbance. We find that repeated
23 disturbances alter community composition and affect community response and recovery to a

24 subsequent disturbance after two years, primarily through increased resistance. This work
25 improves our understanding of microbial temporal dynamics and suggests that novel disturbances
26 may pose a threat to microbial community structure and function.

27 **INTRODUCTION**

28 The effects of disturbance history on community structure and stability have been well
29 studied in animal and plant systems, but only recently has been studied in microbes (Shade review,
30 Bardgett and Caruso 2020, Philippot et al 2021). The distinct physiologies and life histories of
31 microbes compared to macro-organisms may lead to microbes exhibiting unique response patterns
32 to environmental disturbance, making it necessary to re-examine these questions in microbial
33 systems. For example, the high diversity and functional redundancy of microbial communities
34 (Fierer 2017, Chen et al 2022), paired with short turnover times (Powel 1956, Gibson et al 2018)
35 and ability to use dormancy to survive inhospitable periods (Lenon and Jones 2011, Blazewicz et
36 al 2014) could lead to distinct community disturbance responses compared to animals and plants.

37 The disturbance regime of an ecosystem can impact microbial composition by repeatedly
38 selecting for microbial taxa that are tolerant of, or can recover from, disturbance stressors over
39 long time periods. Disturbance experiments have found that past disturbances alter microbial
40 composition (Berga et al 2012, Santos-Medellin et al 2017) and function (Berard et al 2012,
41 Bouskill 2013, Meisner et al 2015, Kaisermann et al 2017) following subsequent disturbances
42 compared to naïve communities, but examples of the effects of long-term disturbance regimes on
43 community structure (Nielsen and Ball 2015) are less common. Theoretical work shows that a
44 history of environmental variation affects the functioning of microbial communities (Hawkes and
45 Keitt 2015), and the field and laboratory experiments that have tested long-term, repeated
46 disturbances have also shown that they alter diversity and composition (Osburn et al. 2019, Shen

47 et al. 2016, Preece et al 2019, Steitz et al 2022), functional diversity (Steitz et al 2022), function
48 (Evans and Wallenstein 2012, Evans and Wallenstein 2014, Fuchsleuger et al 2016, Canarini et
49 al 2021), and network structure (Osburn et al 2019) in a diverse array of systems and stressors.

50 Historic disturbance regimes may not only affect community structure and function but
51 may also affect the community's recovery to future disturbances. Repeated disturbance may
52 increase a community's resistance and resilience as the community adapts to the recurring
53 environmental stress, where resistance describes the degree of compositional change following a
54 disturbance and resilience describes how quickly the community returns to its pre-disturbance
55 composition (Shade et al 2012). Considerable research effort has examined the effects of drought
56 stress on soil microbiomes and finds that past drought events, whether over short or long-term
57 periods, leads to increased resistance (Bouskill 2013, Canarini et al 2021) and/or resilience (Berard
58 2012, de Nijls et al 2019) to future drought stress. Drought-stressed communities have also been
59 found to adapt to drought by altering their recovery strategy (Evans and Wallenstein 2014).
60 However, microbial response to other types of disturbances, like salinity, fire, and heat shock, have
61 yielded less consistent results, including finding little or no community resilience (Berga 2012,
62 Berhard et al 2015, Shen et al 2016, Jurberg 2017b, Calderon et al 2018, Feckler et al 2018, Hu et
63 al 2018). A more thorough investigation of microbial responses to other disturbances, like has been
64 done with drought stress, would lead to more conclusive understanding of the effect of historic
65 disturbance regimes on microbial community recovery and adaptation.

66 We tested the effect of repeated disturbances on soil bacterial community structure and
67 recovery in a brackish marsh in SE Louisiana using salinity pulses as the disturbance. Coastal
68 wetlands are an understudied habitat (Carini et al 2016) prone to frequent and rapid changes in
69 salinity and predicted to experience increased mean salinity over time with sea level rise

70 (Fagherazzi et al 2019). The frequent abiotic fluctuations and long-term salinity changes provide
71 a useful context to examine how soil communities respond to salinity stress follow a long-term
72 disturbance regime. The few studies that have tested salinity stress find communities to have
73 inconsistent recovery and that the frequency of the disturbance impacts community composition
74 (Berga et al 2012, Hu et al 2018, Mobilian et al 2020).

75 We work to expand our understanding of microbial response to salt stress in natural
76 environments by implementing a field-based disturbance experiment, using a two-year monthly
77 salinity addition regime as the historic disturbance. We assessed differences in community
78 composition between communities with no artificial disturbance vs. two years of repeated
79 disturbance history. We then compared the recovery trajectory of bacterial communities to an
80 additional salinity disturbance in the community with the repeated disturbance history vs. the
81 community for which the salinity addition was a novel disturbance. First, we hypothesize that the
82 community with the repeated disturbance history will have different community composition than
83 the community without a disturbance history, indicating the effect of long-term, repeated
84 disturbances on composition. Second, we hypothesize that the community exposed to repeated
85 disturbances will undergo a different recovery trajectory than the community experiencing a novel
86 disturbance. Specifically, we predict that repeated disturbances will lead to less rapid and less
87 extreme compositional change following the salinity addition (increased resistance), and a quicker
88 recovery to the initial community composition (increased resilience) compared to novel
89 disturbance community.

90 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

91 **Experimental Design**

92 In the fall of 2018, 24 permanent 1x1m plots were established in the Pearl River WMA,
93 LA (30°14'14.9"N 89°37'25.6"W). Plots were organized into three treatments: repeated
94 disturbance (two-year monthly disturbance), novel disturbance (single disturbance event), and
95 control (no disturbance), where each treatment had eight plots. Plots were organized in a block
96 design, where each block contained one plot from each treatment for a total of 8 blocks. Each plot
97 was 5-10m from neighboring plots, and all plots represent a native marsh plant community,
98 dominated by *Spartina patens*. Repeated disturbance plots received a monthly addition of 750g of
99 salt (Instant Ocean Sea Salt, Blacksburg, VA) (Moon and Stiling 2002) for two years, increasing
100 salinity by about 33% but returning to initial levels within a month, to establish a 2-year repeated
101 disturbance regime.

102 In December 2020, soil samples were collected from all plots (Day0, "pre-treatment")
103 before adding 750g of salt to the repeated disturbance and novel disturbance plots as the
104 subsequent disturbance event. An unexpected rain event on Day 0 following the sample collection
105 and salinity addition diluted and washed away the salt so that there was no increase in salinity on
106 the following day. To account for this, salt was added again the following day, this time
107 successfully increasing salinity within 24 hours. Day 0 refers to pretreatment conditions (before
108 any salt was added), and Day 1 (and beyond) refers to one day after the second salt addition that
109 successfully increased salinity. Following the salinity addition (Day 1 and beyond), samples were
110 collected in the following time sequence: every other day for the first week, once per week through
111 the first month, and every other week for a second month. A total of ten time points were sampled,
112 including Day 0, which will be referred to as the number of days post-disturbance (ranging from
113 Day 1-55).

114 **Sample Collection**

115 Each collection day, samples were collected from a randomly selected, non-repeating
116 subplot within the plot (excluding the outer 20cm of the plot to avoid edge effects). Soil pore-water
117 salinity was measured at 15cm depth using sippers to suction up pore water and dispense into a
118 falcon tube before measuring with a salinity meter. Daily salinity was measured at two locations
119 in each plot, the plot center, and the daily subplot, to capture spatial heterogeneity. These values
120 were averaged for statistical analyses. Once pore water was collected, soil samples were taken
121 within the subplot with a sterile soil corer to 10 cm depth. Soils were kept on ice until returning to
122 the lab.

123 **Molecular Methods**

124 Upon returning to the lab, samples were homogenized then treated with PMAxx (Biotium
125 Inc., Freemont, CA) to remove relic DNA (free-floating, extracellular DNA or DNA in dead cells).
126 PMAxx is a photo-sensitive reagent that binds to free-floating DNA and prevents downstream
127 amplification. The result is the amplification only of DNA from intact, living cells. Relic DNA has
128 been found to represent about 40% of amplified prokaryotic DNA in soil samples (Carini et al
129 2016, Lennon et al 2018), so removing it provides a more accurate picture of the live bacterial
130 community, which is important given the rapid time sequence of the experiment. Briefly, 0.3g of
131 soil was suspended in 3mL of PBS buffer and 7.5uL of PMA to reach a final sample concentration
132 of 50mM PMAxx. Samples were incubated in the dark for 10 minutes followed by a 15-minute
133 light exposure on ice with a 500W Halogen bulb at a distance of 20cm to activate the PMAxx
134 (Ramirez et al 2018). Samples were inverted and/or rotated to mix once per minute during the dark
135 and light incubation. Samples were then stored at -20°C.

136 DNA was extracted with the Qiagen PowerSoil Kit following the manufacturer's protocol,
137 with the exception that a slurry of 960uL of soil from the PMAxx protocol was added instead of

138 dry soil (Carini et al 2016). Samples were standardized to 2ng/uL before dual-step PCR, done in
139 duplicate, to amplify the 16S region with primers 515F/806R (Farrer et al 2021). PCR product was
140 pooled, purified and concentrated with AMPure, and sequenced on Illumina Miseq v3 (300bp PE)
141 at Duke Sequencing Core, Duke University, Durham, NC.

142 **Bioinformatics**

143 Sequencing data was processed with an ASV method using the Qiime2 (Boyle et al 2019)
144 and DADA2 (Callahan et al 2016) bioinformatic pipelines. Reads were first trimmed where quality
145 scores dropped below ~30, then quality filtered, denoised, and paired reads were joined. Potential
146 contaminants identified from six control samples were removed using the R package decontam
147 (prevalence option) (Davis et al 2018). The resulting data were rarefied to 5500 reads per sample
148 for dissimilarity analysis, singletons were removed from the rarefied data for compositional
149 analysis, and unrarefied with relative abundance was used for taxonomic analysis. Taxonomy was
150 assigned using Greengenes (DeSantis et al 2006).

151 **Statistical Analysis**

152 To assess how the salinity addition increased plot salinity, we used linear mixed effects
153 models to test the effect of Treatment (control, repeated disturbance, novel disturbance) on salinity
154 on each day of the experiment using the function lme() with Plot and Block as nested random
155 effects in the R package nlme (Pinheiro et al 2023). ANOVAs tested significance, and post-hoc
156 tests with the function glht() from the R package multcomp (Hothorn et al 2008) compared the
157 salinity levels between treatments on each day to confirm the two salt treatments (repeated
158 disturbance and novel disturbance) did not differ from each other.

159 To test the first hypothesis and compare the pre-treatment communities, the data were
160 subset to only include the Day 0 samples. A PERMANOVA using adonis2() in the R package

161 vegan (Oksanen et al 2022) was used to test the effect of Treatment on composition using the strata
162 argument to restrict permutations by block. Dispersion was calculated with the function
163 betadisper(). Subsequent pairwise PERMANOVAs were used to compare Day 0 composition
164 between each treatment by further subsetting the Day 0 dataframe to only include two treatments
165 per comparison. A dbRDA ordination plot was used to visualize the Day 0 communities with the
166 capscale() function in vegan, conditioned on block. The points were plotted by extracting the CAP
167 scores from the capscale() output and plotting in ggplot2 (Wickham 2016).

168 To test the second hypothesis, that the treatments had different recovery trajectories,
169 PERMANOVAs were used to test the effect of Treatment, Day (as a factor), and their interaction
170 on community composition over the whole collection period. In order to account for repeated
171 measures of plots over time, PERMANOVAs were done manually in R with different types of
172 models and randomization restrictions (Simpson 2020) using adonis2() and the how() function in
173 the package permute (Simpson 2022). First, to calculate the correct *F*-statistic for the effect of
174 Treatment, we ran an adonis2() model testing the effect of Plot + Treatment and extracted the sums
175 of squares for the Treatment variable (divided by df) and divided it by the sums of squares for the
176 Plot variable (divided by df); this accounts for the fact that in a repeated measures design, the
177 denominator in the *F*-statistic is the whole-plot error rather than the residual error (Simpson 2020).
178 We then performed a permutation test with 999 permutations, randomizing the plots freely within
179 blocks (comparing Treatments), but not randomizing within plots (individual samples), using the
180 how() function. For each permutation, we ran the same adonis2() model and calculated the *F*-
181 statistic for the Treatment effect. We then calculated a *P*-value by comparing the *F*-statistic of our
182 actual data to the distribution of *F*-statistics of the randomized data. To test the effect of Day, we
183 fit an adonis2() model testing the effect of Plot + Day and restricted permutations within plot,

184 which compares samples taken over time to only the other samples within that plot. Lastly, to test
185 the effect of Day*Treatment, we fit an adonis2() model testing the effect of Plot + Day +
186 Day*Treatment, again randomizing the plots freely within blocks, but not within plots. Dispersion
187 was calculated with the function betadisper(). These results were visualized with a dbRDA
188 showing the effect of the interaction of Treatment and Day on composition, conditioning by block
189 with the capscale() function. Centroids and standard error were calculated from the extracted CAP
190 values and plotted in ggplot2.

191 To assess resistance and resilience, we examined day-to-day change in composition and
192 abundance with several methods. Firstly, pairwise PERMANOVA identified significant
193 compositional change between Day 0 and each subsequent day by treatment. With this method,
194 we assessed resistance by how long the communities resisted significant compositional change
195 following the salinity disturbance, and resilience by how quickly the community returned to a pre-
196 disturbance community composition (not significantly different from Day 0). Due to the difference
197 in composition found between treatments on Day 0 (treatment effect, see results), we compared
198 daily composition to the Day 0 composition of each respective treatment, instead of to the control.
199 This method identifies how each treatment deviates from its initial community, which more
200 accurately describes community changes than comparing the treatments to the control since their
201 initial communities differed (Supplement Table 2 for daily compositional comparisons of each
202 treatment to the control). After first subsetting the data by treatment, then by day (so that each
203 dataframe contained only two time points, Day 0 and one other day), we used the adonis2()
204 function with the how() function as described above to account for repeated measures (permuting
205 samples within plots, but not permuting plots freely). Resistance was assessed based on if or how
206 quickly community composition significantly changed from Day 0. Resilience was assessed by if

207 or how quickly the community returned to a composition similar to the Day 0 composition. To
208 visualize the results, we plotted the effect of Day on community composition with a dbRDA
209 conditioned on block for each treatment. The treatments were ordinated separately to more
210 accurately see how the bacterial composition changes from Day 0 in each treatment using the
211 function capscale() conditioned on block. Spider plots show the centroids per day, calculated based
212 on extracted CAP values, connected to each individual sample point, plotted in ggplot2.

213 In addition, we considered resistance in terms of the degree of community change
214 following the disturbance by using Bray Curtis dissimilarity. We quantified the Bray Curtis
215 dissimilarity between the Day 0 community of each treatment and every subsequent day. Higher
216 values indicate more compositional change, representing lower resistance. We also compared the
217 Bray Curtis Dissimilarity between Day 0 and the day that each treatment underwent significant
218 composition change in response to the salinity addition (Day 1 (novel) and Day 3 (repeated), see
219 results). This allows us to compare the degree of change that each treatment experienced and
220 identify with treatment underwent more extreme change. We used the function beta.pair.abund()
221 from the R package betapart (Baselga et al 2023) to create a dissimilarity matrix. We extracted the
222 dissimilarity values between the Day 0 and every subsequent day per plot to compare dissimilarity
223 between the treatments. Using the same linear model as described for the salinity tests, we
224 compared how dissimilarity from Day 0 varied by treatment, and the same post hoc method as
225 described above was used to assess significance between days and treatments.

226 To assess how abundance of key taxa changed over time and between treatment, we used
227 a similarity percentage analysis with the function simper() in the R packaged vegan. This analysis
228 calculates the average contribution of each taxon to the community dissimilarity between sample
229 units. Permutations then calculate if the contribution to dissimilarity is significant per taxa. We

230 considered the dissimilarity between the three treatments (control-repeated disturbance, control-
231 novel disturbance, repeated disturbance-novel disturbance). Using unrarefied, relative abundance
232 data, we identified the 100 ASVs that most significant contributed to dissimilarity between each
233 treatment comparison (300 total). Some of the 300 ASVs were present in more than one
234 comparison, so after repeats were removed, there were 254 ASVs (the repeated taxa were still
235 present in the analysis, but only listed once, resulting in a total of 254). To visualize abundance
236 changes in these taxa over time, we subset our data to only include these 254 ASVs. Abundance
237 values were log transformed and plotted as a heatmap using the function `pheatmap()` in the R
238 package `pheatmap` (Kold 2019), with abundance values centered and scaled and taxa summed and
239 labeled by the phylum.

240 All statistics and figures were run in R 4.1.2 (R Core Team 2023).

241 **RESULTS**

242 **Salinity Disturbance**

243 The salinity addition significantly increased salinity in the treatment plots for eight days,
244 and by Day 14 salinity returned to pre-treatment levels (figure 1, Supplement Table 1). We
245 consider the disturbance phase to last from Day 1 through Day 8, and the recovery phase to begin
246 on Day 14. This timeline of salinity elevation is consistent with salinity measurements taken during
247 the 2-year disturbance treatment to confirm the effect of the repeated salt additions, which showed
248 salinity returning to ambient conditions after about two weeks.

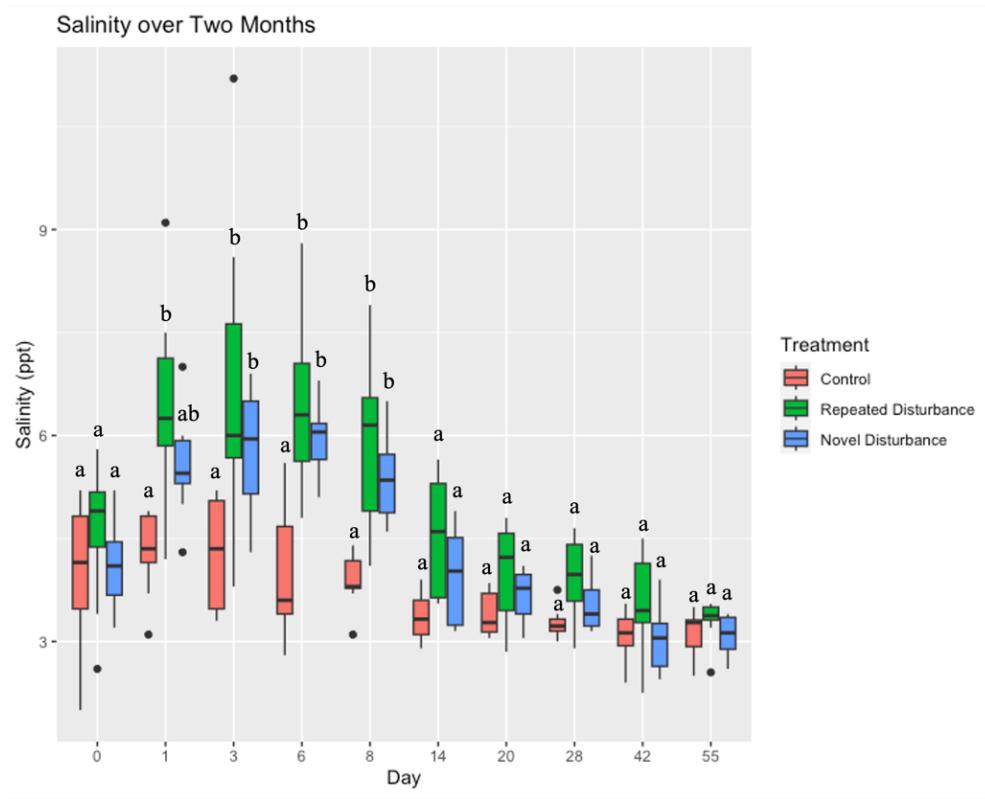


Figure 1: A boxplot of the salinity of each treatment over the two-month sample collection. Salt was added after salinity was measured on Day 0. Changes in the control represent ambient salinity changes in the system. Significant differences ($p<0.05$) in salinity per day between treatments are shown for Days 0-14 based on post-hoc tests (supplement table 1).

Effect of repeated salinity additions on community composition

The Day 0 community composition significantly differed between treatments (figure 2; $R^2 = 0.116$, pseudo $F_{(2,20)} = 1.31$, $P = 0.014$), and pairwise PERMANOVAs comparing treatments find that the repeated disturbance composition was significantly different from the control ($R^2 = 0.088$, pseudo $F_{(1,14)} = 1.34$, $P = 0.039$) and the novel disturbance ($R^2 = 0.087$, pseudo $F_{(1,13)} = 1.23$, $P = 0.039$), but the novel disturbance and control did not differ ($R^2 = 0.093$, pseudo $F_{(1,13)} = 1.33$, $P = 0.094$). There was no significant difference in dispersion (compositional variance) between treatments ($F = 1.98$, $P = 0.163$), however, the repeated disturbance treatment showed a non-significant trend of decreased variance compared to the other treatments.

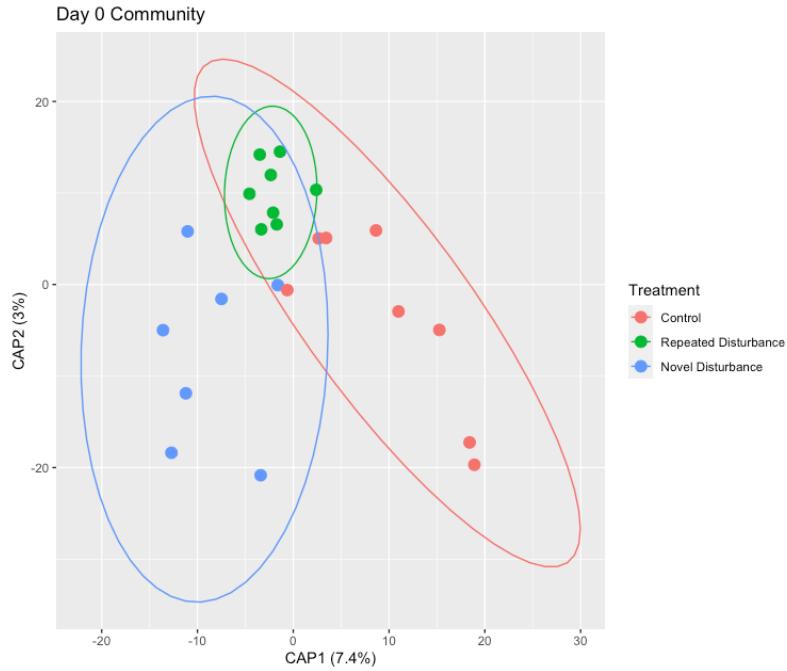
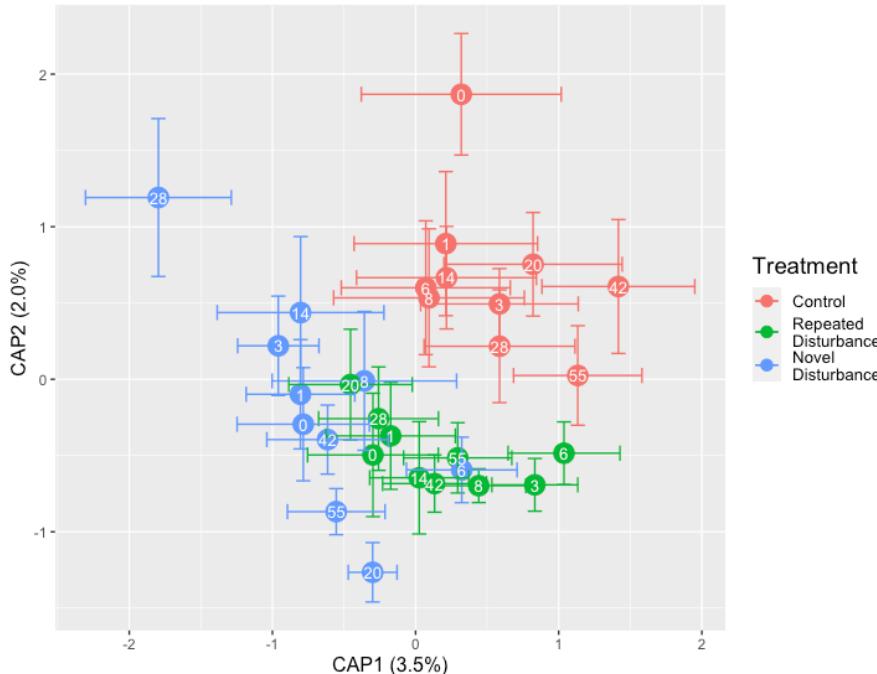


Figure 2: dbRDA plotting the effect of Treatment, conditioned by block, on community composition on Day 0.

261

262 **Effect of repeated salinity additions on disturbance response**

263 Over the two months following the salinity addition, community composition significantly
 264 differed based on the disturbance regime (Treatment effect; pseudo $F_{(2, 177)} = 2.05, P = 0.038$) and
 265 days since disturbance (Day effect; pseudo $F_{(9, 153)} = 1.67, P = 0.001$), and the disturbance
 266 communities underwent different recovery trajectories over time (Treatment x Day interaction;
 267 pseudo $F_{(18, 135)} = 1.19, P = 0.0013$) (figure 3). Over the whole experiment, dispersion was
 268 significantly different by Treatment ($F = 6.00, P = 0.003$) and by Day ($F = 2.16, P = 0.027$). Like the
 269 Day 0 trend, the repeated disturbance treatment had lower compositional variance than the other
 270 treatments (Supplement Figure 1). These results support our second hypothesis, that the treatment
 271 communities respond to the disturbance differently based on their past disturbance regime.



272

273 Resistance

274 We found a slight increase in resistance in the repeated disturbance community compared to
 275 the novel disturbance based on how quickly the communities underwent significant compositional
 276 change following the salinity disturbance (table 1, figures 4a-c). The repeated disturbance
 277 treatment had only one day of significant compositional change away from the starting community,
 278 on Day 3, and the variance of community composition never changed. The novel disturbance
 279 underwent multiple days of compositional change, including on Day 1. This indicates lower
 280 resistance, and a rapid response to the salinity disturbance. The novel disturbance also showed the
 281 only significant change in compositional variance, which significantly decreased on Day 6
 282 compared to Day 0. Overall, the control had multiple days of significant compositional change,
 283 demonstrating ambient bacterial dynamics.

284 We also used Bray Curtis Dissimilarity to assess resistance by quantifying the degree of
 285 community change on each day compared to Day 0. Dissimilarity over time differed by treatment
 286 (df=13, F=12.77, P=0.0009; figure 5) and the novel disturbance had higher dissimilarity over the

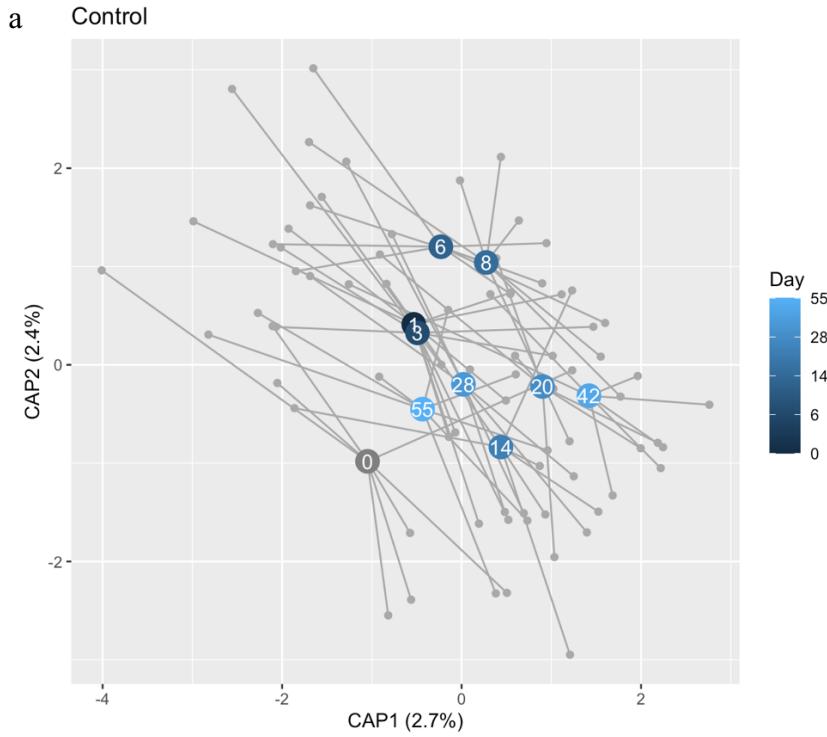
Figure 3: dbRDA plotting the effect of the Treatment x Day interaction, conditioned by block, on community composition. Points represent the centroid of community composition on a given day by Treatment and bars represent standard error. Centroids are labelled by day.

287 sampling period than the repeated disturbance and the control, supporting our prediction. Post hoc
 288 tests show that dissimilarity on Day 3 was significantly higher in the novel disturbance community
 289 than the repeated disturbance ($p=0.012$) and the control ($p=0.003$). We also assessed the degree of
 290 change by comparing the dissimilarity of both salt treatments on the day that they underwent
 291 significant composition change based on the PERMANOVA results (novel: Day 1, repeated: Day
 292 3). While the novel disturbance had higher dissimilarity, the difference was not significant
 293 ($p=0.89$). Together with the PERMANOVA result, we found a moderate increase in resistance in
 294 the repeated disturbance treatment compared to the novel disturbance.

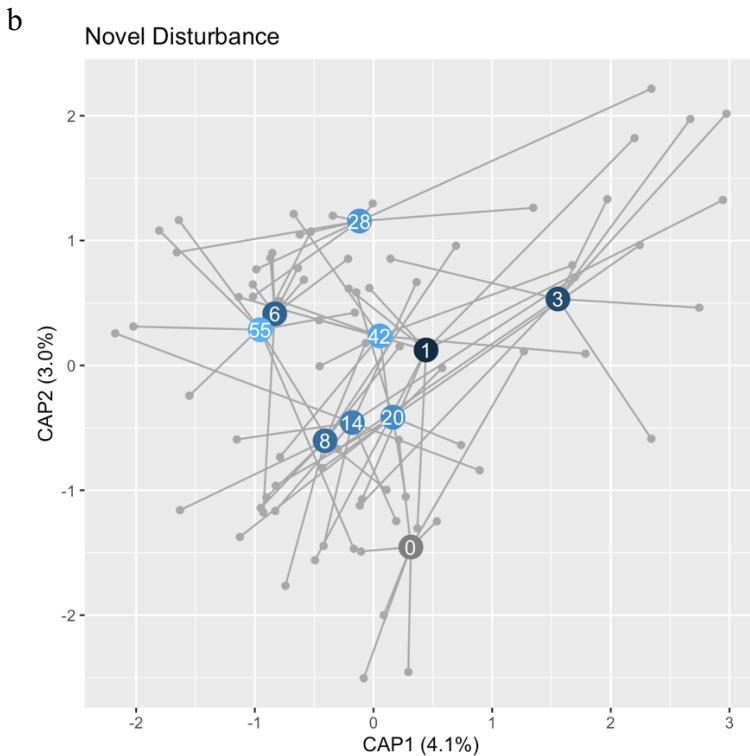
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	Repeated Disturbance		Novel Disturbance		Control	
Day Comparison	P-value	Dispersion	P-value	Dispersion	P-value	Dispersion
Day 0-1	0.64	0.64	0.0078**	0.24	0.063 [†]	0.46
Day 0-3	0.015*	0.72	0.63	0.25	0.19	0.46
Day 0-6	0.70	0.67	0.38	0.040*	0.016*	0.30
Day 0-8	0.40	0.98	0.45	0.40	0.063 [†]	0.26
Day 0-14	0.87	0.80	0.57	0.82	0.14	0.70
Day 0-20	0.90	0.64	0.46	0.95	0.0078**	0.23
Day 0-28	0.98	0.43	0.0078**	0.90	0.070 [†]	0.19
Day 0-42	0.94	0.41	0.13	0.47	0.078 [†]	0.60
Day 0-55	0.996	0.40	0.047*	0.724	0.063 [†]	0.43

Table 1: Results of pairwise PERMANOVAs comparing the composition of each treatment on Day 0 to every subsequent day. Significance is represented as follow: $\dagger P<0.1$, $*$ $P<0.05$, $** P<0.01$



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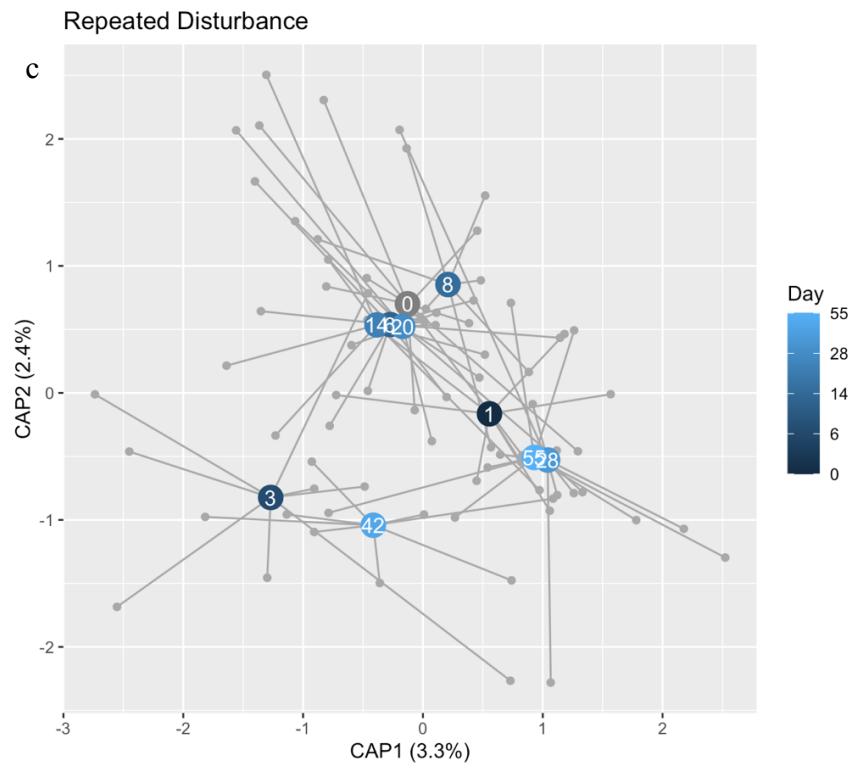
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Figure 4a-c: dbRDAs plotting the community composition of each day by treatment (ordinated separately): a) control, b) novel disturbance, c) repeated disturbance. Centroids of each day are labeled, and segments show the distance of each individual points (grey points) from the daily centroid.

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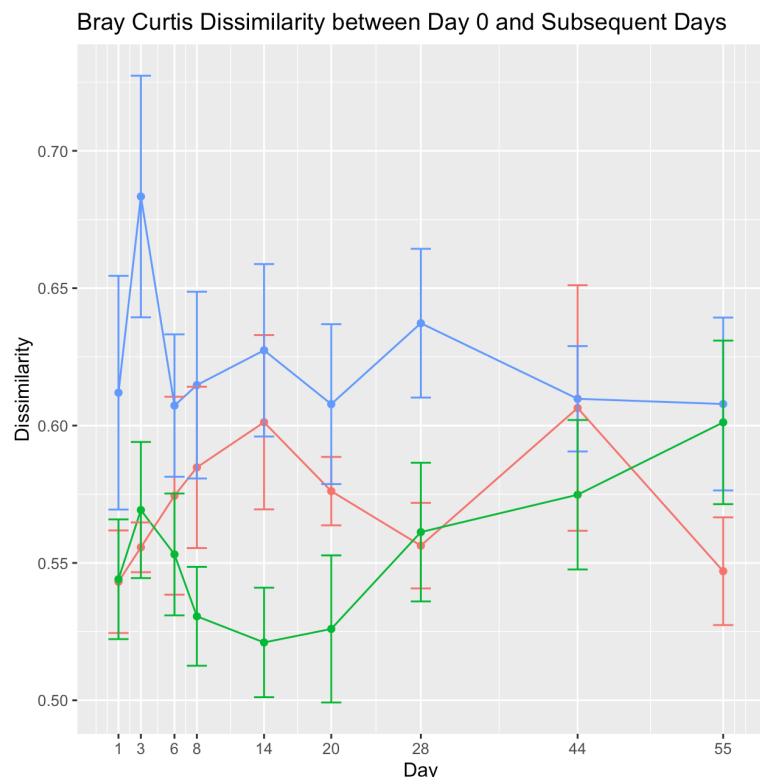


Figure 5: Bray Curtis dissimilarity between the Day 0 community and each subsequent day by treatment. The novel disturbance had significantly higher dissimilarity than the control ($p=0.005$) and repeated disturbance ($p=0.023$) on Day 3. On Day 14, the novel disturbance dissimilarity was significantly higher than the repeated disturbance ($p=0.047$), but not different from the control.

303 **Resilience**

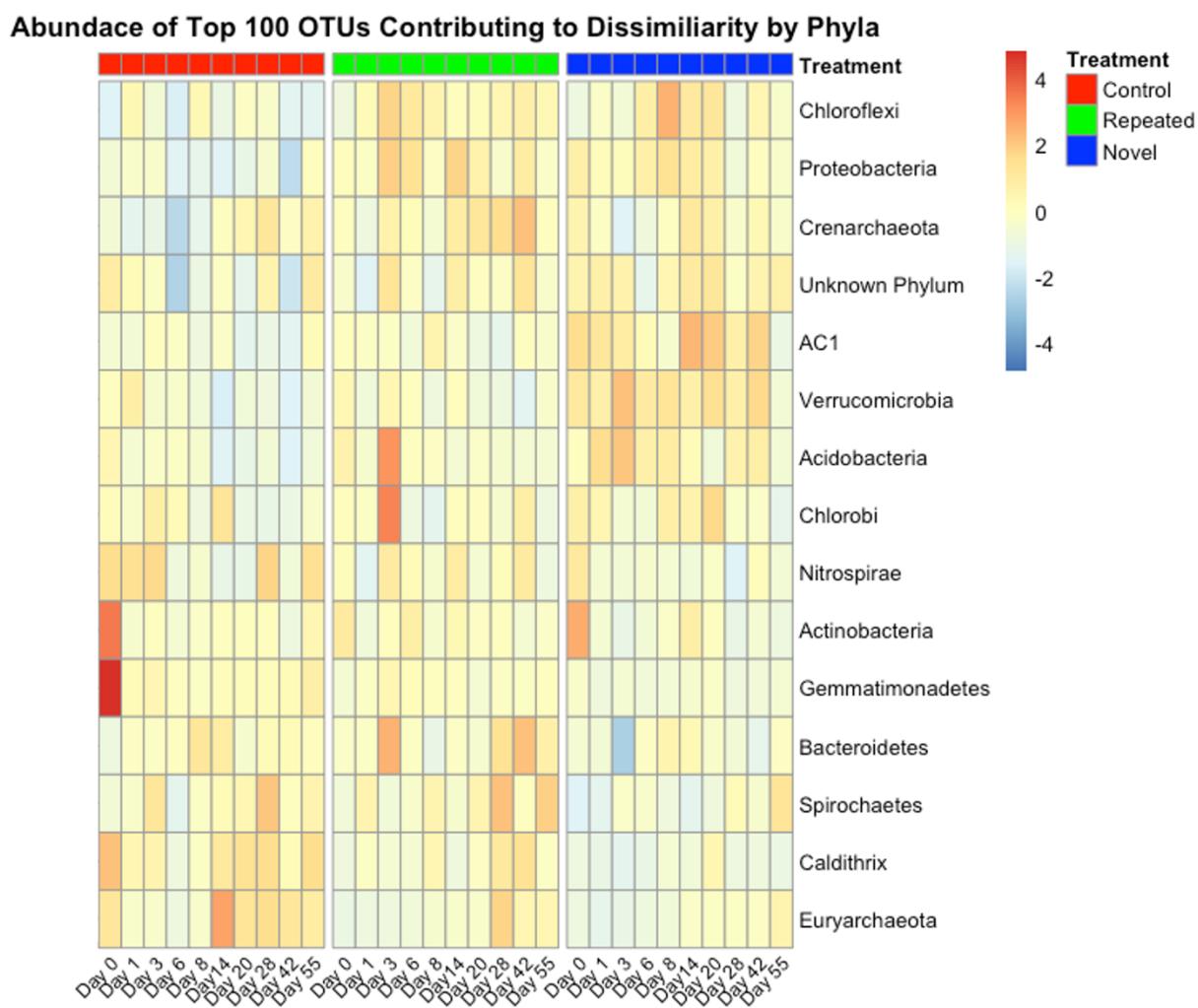
304 We found equally high resilience in both treatments based on how quickly community
305 composition recovered after undergoing significant compositional change. Both salt treatments
306 experienced one day of significant composition change during the disturbance phase, and both
307 immediately returned to a composition similar to Day 0, even while salinity was still elevated. This
308 indicates high resilience in both communities. After salinity returned to normal (Day 14 and
309 beyond) the community composition and abundance continued to change in the control and novel
310 disturbance but remained constant in the repeated disturbance.

311 To further examine resilience, we used a heatmap to plot relative abundance changes of the
312 taxa that most significantly contributed to community dissimilarity between treatments based on a
313 similarity percentage analysis (figure 6, Supplemental Table 3 for full taxonomy). In the control,
314 Actinobacteria, Gemmatimonadetes, Caldithrix, Nitrospirae, and Euryarchaeota were among the
315 most abundant phyla. The repeated disturbance had high abundance of Acidobacteria, Chlorobi,
316 Chloroflexi, Proteobacteria, and Bacteroidetes. The novel disturbance was dominated by
317 Actinobacteria, Acidobacteria, Verrucomicrobia, Chloroflexi, and AC1 (a phylum in Greengenes).

318 There were notable changes in abundant taxa in the salt treatments before and after the salinity
319 addition and over the course of the experiment. On Day 0, the novel disturbance treatment was
320 like the control with high abundance of Actinobacteria. However, immediately following the
321 salinity addition (Day 1), the abundance of Actinobacteria decreased in the novel disturbance,
322 suggesting the salt sensitivity of this phylum. Interestingly, several phyla increased in abundance
323 following the salinity addition, but differed in their abundance patterns between salt treatments.
324 Acidobacteria was amplified in both treatments following the addition, but immediate recovered
325 in the repeated disturbance while remaining high in the novel disturbance. Chlorobi and

326 Bacteroidetes increased in the repeated treatment only, while the latter decreased in the novel
327 treatment. Verrucomicrobia and AC1 were only elevated in the novel disturbance treatment.

328 While there were many abundance changes unique to each salt treatment, overall, there was a
329 pattern of phyla abundance spiking and quickly recovering in the repeated disturbance compared
330 to abundance increases that were maintained in the novel disturbance. By the final timepoints, the
331 repeated disturbance is similar to the control, with elevated Spirochaetes, Caldithrix, and
332 Euryarchaeota, suggesting recovery, while the novel disturbance did not show taxonomic
333 recovery.



335 **Figure 6:** Heatmap plotting the abundance of the 100 taxa that significantly contributed the most to community dissimilarity by treatment (total 254), labeled by phylum. Warm colors represent high abundance and cool colors represent low abundance. The columns are arranged first by treatment, constituting each panel and indicated with colors on the top of the figure. Within each panel, the columns are in chronological order by day, labeled on the bottom of the figure. Full taxonomic classification of the ASVs represented in this analysis and figure can be found in Supplement Table 3.

336 **DISCUSSION**

337 This study examined the effect of past disturbances on soil bacterial composition and
338 disturbance response. We hypothesized that communities with a salinity disturbance history will
339 differ from those that have not experienced an experimental disturbance, and that their recovery
340 from a subsequent salinity disturbance will differ. Overall, we found support for both hypotheses.

341 This experiment detected bacterial community compositional changes within days
342 following an environmental disturbance. This rapid timescale is consistent with other lab and
343 mesocosm research (Jurburg et al 2017a, Rodríguez-Valdecantos 2017, Hu et al 2018, Shade et al
344 2011, Berga et al 2012, Ager et al 2010) and is the fastest timescale of microbial community
345 change found in nature as far as we are aware. The control treatment captured the ambient bacterial
346 dynamics that occur across two months, demonstrating how variable communities can be over
347 time. This result helps inform our understanding of natural soil temporal dynamics in wetlands.

348 **Effect of long-term disturbances on composition**

349 The repeated salinity disturbances over two years altered community composition, as Day
350 0 composition differed between the repeated disturbance treatment and the treatments that had not
351 experience past disturbances (novel, control). While the methods used do not identify a
352 mechanism, this points to the salinity addition selecting for salt tolerant taxa. Salinity is an
353 important factor in structuring bacterial communities (Lozupone and Knight 2007), and
354 community salt tolerance has been found to be proportional to soil salinity (Rath et al 2019). Our
355 results show that the monthly salinity addition, which increased salinity by ~33% for about two
356 weeks, or half of the time for two years, constituted a significant disturbance to the ambient salinity
357 regime and cultivated a bacterial community adapted to altered salinity.

358 **Recovery trajectories**

359 We found that the repeated and novel disturbance treatments underwent different recovery
360 trajectories following the salinity disturbance, supporting our second hypothesis. The differences
361 in their trajectories were seen in compositional differences over the recovery period (interactive
362 effect), elevated relative abundances of distinct taxa, and differences in community variance.
363 While both salt treatments had similar responses to the salinity disturbance, the relative abundance
364 results show the repeated disturbance recovered taxonomically while the novel disturbance does
365 not, which could reflect the compositional results. The treatments also differed in terms of
366 community variance, where the repeated disturbance had consistently lower variance than the other
367 treatments, and the novel disturbance had a sharp decrease in dispersion following the salinity
368 disturbance but recovered after the first week. This suggests that the salinity disturbance decreases
369 community variance, likely due to the death of salt sensitive taxa (Wichern et al 2006). The low
370 variance in the repeated disturbance treatment, both on Day 0 and following the salinity addition,
371 suggest that the past disturbances had a strong filtering effect on the community.

372 **Disturbance response: resistance**

373 The repeated disturbance treatment increased community resistance to subsequent
374 disturbances, as we predicted, but only slightly. The salinity addition led to compositional changes
375 in the novel disturbance community on Day 1, and the repeated disturbance community changed
376 on Day 3. While this result demonstrates increased resistance, as has been found in other repeated
377 disturbance studies (Bérard et al 2012, Bouskill et al 2013, Canarini et al 2021), the difference
378 between the treatments was only one sampling time point, representing only a modest increase.

379 We also considered resistance in terms of degree of community change using dissimilarity,
380 which also demonstrated a modest increase in resistance in the repeated disturbance treatment.
381 During the disturbance phase, the novel disturbance community had higher dissimilarity than the

382 repeated disturbance, indicating more extreme community changes. This generally supports our
383 prediction, but with one notable exception. We anticipated that the novel disturbance would
384 undergo more extreme compositional change than the repeated disturbance during its initial
385 disturbance response (Day 1 and Day 3, respectively). However, we did not find a difference in
386 dissimilarity between the novel treatment on Day 1 and the repeated treatment on Day 3,
387 suggesting they both underwent similar degrees of change in the immediate response to salinity.
388 Taken together, the resistance results show that 1) the initial community response to the salinity
389 disturbance was slightly delayed in the repeated disturbance treatment due to past exposures, 2)
390 the salt treatments underwent the same degree of community change in response to the initial
391 disturbance, and 3) the repeated disturbance community remained more like its pre-treatment type
392 over the disturbance phase than the novel disturbance.

393 The mechanisms that caused the slight increase in resistance are unknown. The repeated
394 salinity additions could have filtered out salt sensitive taxa (Rath et al 2019, Logares et al 2013)
395 as the decrease in community variance in the repeated disturbance treatment would suggest. The
396 past disturbances could also have selected for taxa with an improved ability to withstand stressful
397 conditions through adaptations like increased dormancy potential (Kearns et al 2018). While our
398 methods removed relic DNA to capture a clearer signal of community change, they did not
399 differentiate between the active and dormant community. If certain taxa adapted to survive
400 frequent salinity pulses by increase dormancy potential, they would still be detected in our
401 sampling and result in fewer compositional changes. Barnett and Shade (2023) compared the
402 resilience of the whole bacterial community to only the active (non-dormant) community by
403 comparing DNA and RNA sequencing and found stronger recovery patterns in the whole

404 community than the active subset. This suggest that dormancy and the microbial seedbank are
405 critical for community disturbance response and might explain our results.

406 Other studies of disturbance dynamics have found that disturbances select for microbial
407 specialists (Renes et al 202) and tolerant taxa (Jurburg et al 2017b), or cause bacteria to adopt new
408 life strategies to withstand disturbances (Evans and Wallenstein 2014). Through evolution and/or
409 horizontal gene transfer, these traits could have increased resistance to future salinity disturbances.
410 Bacteria have been found to evolve stress tolerance in 250-2000 generations (Zhou and Ning
411 2017), which is within the timeframe of the two-year repeated disturbance conditioning phase and
412 could explain our results. These adaptations would lead to increased community resistance to a
413 repeated disturbance, but more research is needed to understand which mechanisms are more
414 important in driving microbial compositional changes in nature.

415 **Disturbance response: resilience**

416 Overall, we found resilience in this system in both the repeated and novel disturbance
417 treatments, but the heat map suggest higher resilience in the repeated disturbance community, as
418 expected. While the rapid community response to the salinity addition during the disturbance phase
419 was notable, perhaps more surprising was the immediate recovery in both salt-disturbed
420 treatments. We predicted that both communities would exhibit high resilience due to the frequent
421 abiotic fluctuations in the system, but we did not expect recovery to happen while salinity was still
422 elevated. Other studies have found bacterial communities to recover from a disturbance in about
423 25 days (Jurburg et al 2017a), but more work examining bacterial community changes over short
424 time periods would be beneficial to understand community recovery patterns on this time scale.
425 Our results show that the repeated disturbance community maintained its post-recovery
426 community (Day 6) for the remainder of the experiment, while the novel disturbance and control

427 communities continued to shift over time. This, along with the decreased community variance,
428 suggests that the past salinity additions had a strong filtering effect on the taxa present and
429 continues to impact the community dynamics beyond the recovery phase.

430 The focus of this study was on compositional responses to disturbance, but there were
431 notable changes in the abundances of phyla known to be salt sensitive/tolerant and known as either
432 nitrogen or sulfur cyclers, suggesting potential functional differences between treatments. Firstly,
433 the control had high abundances of salt-sensitive phyla, such as Actinobacteria and
434 Gemmatimonadetes (Wijaya et al 2022, Li et al 2021), and the repeated disturbance was defined
435 by high abundance of salt-tolerance taxa, like Bacteroidetes and Proteobacteria (Wijaya et al 2022,
436 Mhete et al 2020). The control had higher abundance of phyla known as nitrogen cyclers, like
437 Nitrospira (Mhete et al 2020, Chen et al 2022), while the salt treatments had high abundance of
438 sulfur cycling phyla, like Chlorobi (Kuypers et al 2018, Jagannathan and Golbeck 2009) and
439 Proteobacteria (Arora 2017, Wasmund et al 2017). These results support other research finding
440 that nitrogen fixers and nitrogen cycling genes decrease as soil salinity increases (Li et al 2021,
441 Morrissey and Franklin 2015) while Proteobacteria (particularly sulfur-reducing classes) increase
442 in abundance with salinity (Li et al 2021, Morrissey and Franklin 2015). Microbial communities
443 are often considered to have high functional redundancy, but recent studies have found recovery
444 patterns are decoupled between composition/diversity and soil community function, demonstrating
445 the importance of considering the resilience of both community structure and function (Sjöstedt et
446 al 2018, Choi et al 2017). It is possible that the repeated salinity disturbances in our experiment
447 could have cultivated a community with different functions and altered nutrient availability, but a
448 focused examination of microbial function would be necessary to determine this.

449 **Limitations**

450 The central limitations of this study are rooted in the challenges of field-based microbiome
451 surveying. Soil collection required destructive sampling, so the same location and, potentially,
452 community could not be repeatedly sampled within our plots. Instead, samples were collected over
453 time from randomly chosen sub-plots. Our methods attempted to account for this by distributing
454 salt across the plot as evenly as possible, measuring salinity from multiple plot locations, and
455 taking care to ensure all plots had a similar and homogenous plant community; however, samples
456 were collected from a new location in the plot on each sampling day which therefore introduced
457 unknown community variance. The effects of the interacting plant community were also not
458 considered, though care was taken to ensure all plots had a similar plant community and that
459 collection was done outside of growing season to reduce plant effects on the soil microbes. The
460 molecular methods used do not distinguish between active and dormant bacteria and do not focus
461 on functional differences between treatments. Further investigation of these specific areas would
462 provide greater insight into the mechanisms microbes utilized to withstand disturbance and
463 functional consequences of disturbance events.

464 **CONCLUSION**

465 In conclusion, this study found long-term, past disturbances to alter bacterial community
466 composition and response to future disturbances. We identified moderate increases in resistance
467 and resilience to disturbance based on the community's exposure to past disturbances, supporting
468 similar results found in systems with different disturbances, mainly drought. Furthermore, we
469 found soil bacterial to undergo significant compositional change following a salinity disturbance
470 in a matter of days, confirming the short timescale of bacteria turnover found in lab-based
471 experiments. These results suggest that soil microbiomes are likely well-adapted to typical abiotic

472 fluctuations and are resilient to disturbances, but novel disturbances may alter community structure
473 and function.

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