

# Abundance and biomass of protists from epifluorescence counts and bulk biomass from extracted chl-a from samples from R/V Atlantic Explorer cruises AE1102, AE1118, AE1206, AE1219 in the Sargasso Sea, Bermuda Atlantic Time-Series Station in 2011-12

**Website:** <https://www.bco-dmo.org/dataset/4019>

**Data Type:** Cruise Results

**Version:** 1

**Version Date:** 2015-01-13

## Project

» [Plankton Community Composition and Trophic Interactions as Modifiers of Carbon Export in the Sargasso Sea](#) (Trophic BATS)

## Program

» [Ocean Carbon and Biogeochemistry](#) (OCB)

| Contributors                          | Affiliation                                         | Role                            |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
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## Abstract

Abundance and biomass of protists from epifluorescence counts and bulk biomass from extracted chl-a from samples from R/V Atlantic Explorer cruises AE1102, AE1118, AE1206, AE1219 in the Sargasso Sea, Bermuda Atlantic Time-Series Station in 2011-12.

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## Coverage

**Spatial Extent:** N:33.5 E:-63.48 S:30.05 W:-65.75

**Temporal Extent:** 2011-02-25 - 2012-07-30

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## Dataset Description

Protist abundance and biomass based on epifluorescence counts and bulk biomass based on extracted

chlorophyll-a measurements. Samples were collected during four cruises in the Sargasso Sea during spring and summer 2011-2012.

## Methods & Sampling

### Water Column Sampling:

Water column sampling was performed on four cruises during the spring and the summer of 2011 and 2012 at the Bermuda Atlantic Time-series Study station (31°40'N 64°10'W, BATS) and in the mesoscale eddies found in the surrounding area of the Sargasso Sea. For each cruise, two stations were sampled, usually in the center of a mesoscale eddy and at BATS. The edge of the eddy was sampled two times, as well. To be able to get a better reproducibility of data, each experiment was replicated.

For each experiment, seawater samples were collected pre-dawn (on deck 2:30-4:00, local time) at four different depths within the euphotic zone (20m, 50m, 80m and the Deep Chlorophyll Maximum, DCM). Twenty-one 10L Niskin bottles were attached to a rosette with conductivity, temperature, depth sensors (CTD), and an *in vivo* fluorometer. This sensor allowed for recording in real time of chlorophyll fluorescence and the DCM for each station. The water that was collected from the 10L Niskin bottles was sampled for abundance and biomass of the plankton community.

### Bulk measurements:

Chlorophyll-a was extracted from seawater (250 ml and 400 ml depending on the dilution), with 90% acetone and measured after 24hrs at 4 degrees C in the dark onboard the ship using a TD 700 Laboratory Fluorometer using the non-acidification technique (Welschmeyer 1994). These data were used as a proxy for the phytoplankton biomass in the water column and to calculate the bulk growth and grazing rates of the phytoplankton community.

### Microscopy Analyses:

To determine cell abundance and the biomass of the protist community (other than ciliates), epifluorescence microscopy was used. Ciliate abundance and biomass was determined using bright-field inverted microscopy (Amacher et al. 2009; Neuer and Cowles 1994). *Epifluorescence microscopy*: 25-50ml of seawater from each depth was filtered onto black membrane filters with 0.2 um pore size. Each sample was fixed first with 0.1 ml of 50% of cold glutaraldehyde, stored for 24 hours at 4 degrees C, and then filtered after addition of 0.2 ml of 1% 4', 6-diamino-2-phenylindole (DAPI). Slides were stored frozen at -20 degrees C onboard ship until transport back to the laboratory at ASU, and stored at -40 degrees C until analysis. The organisms were counted using a ZEISS Axioplan Epifluorescence Microscope equipped with a 100x Plan-NEOFLUAR 100x/1.30 oil, objective lens. Pico, nano and micro plankton were identified and separated in categories based on their approximate geometric shape, size, and on their fluorescence under blue and UV light excitation as described in [Table 1](#) (Amacher et al. 2009, Hansen et al. in prep). Organisms were counted in one to several stripes across the slide. Abundance was then calculated based on number of counted cells, fraction of slide area counted and sample volume. The 95% confidence interval of each organismal count was determined as a function of total cells counted in a given category, according to Lund et al. (1958). The following equations were applied, where x stands for the number of cells counted on each slide:

$$LL = x + 1.42 - 1.960 (\text{sqrt}(x + 0.5)) \quad [\text{Lower limit}]$$

$$UL = x + 2.42 - 1.960 (\text{sqrt}(x + 1.5)) \quad [\text{Upper limit}]$$

Biomass calculations were done for each category of organism counted. Biovolume for each group was determined based on size and shape of the organism by approximating the closest geometric shape (Hillebrand et al. 1999) and then converted into units of carbon based on the carbon to volume ratio (Menden-Deuer and Lessard 2000).

### Flow cytometry analyses:

Collection and fixation of flow cytometry samples was carried out according to established methods of the BATS program (<http://www.bios.edu/research/projects/bats/>) and analyzed by the group of Co-PI Dr. Mike Lomas.

Refer to the original [dataset legend](#) (PDF) for more information.

## Data Processing Description

BCO-DMO Processing Notes:

- Added lat and lon for each station & cast from the metadata form.
- Replaced spaces with underscores.
- Replaced blanks with 'nd' to indicate 'no data'.
- Dates/times assumed to be in UTC/GMT, based on comparison with other Trophic BATS datasets.

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## Data Files

| File                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>protists_biomass.csv</b>(Comma Separated Values (.csv), 49.93 KB)<br/> MD5:caa79be2b667f68687497c90b30c7deb</p> <p>Primary data file for dataset ID 4019</p> |

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## Supplemental Files

| File                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Neuer protist abundance and biomass original legend</b><br/> filename: Biomass_Neuer_Legend_011315.pdf (Portable Document Format (.pdf), 188.74 KB)<br/> MD5:9e324c51c01d3fea977aba9403158a87</p> <p>Neuer protist abundance and biomass original legend (supplemental doc)</p> |
| <p><b>Neuer Table 1 protist abundance and biomass supplemental doc</b><br/> filename: Table1_methodology_neuer.pdf (Portable Document Format (.pdf), 102.51 KB)<br/> MD5:607ba2501ae7a30149c9172d4b246dbe</p> <p>Neuer Table 1 protist abundance and biomass supplemental doc</p>     |

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## Related Publications

Agatha S. (2004). A Cladistic Approach for the Classification of Oligotrichid Ciliates (Ciliophora: Spirotricha). *Acta protozoologica*, 43(3), 201–217. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2854820/>  
*General*

Agatha, S., & Strüder-Kypke, M. C. (2007). Phylogeny of the order Choreotrichida (Ciliophora, Spirotricha, Oligotrichea) as inferred from morphology, ultrastructure, ontogenesis, and SSrRNA gene sequences. *European Journal of Protistology*, 43(1), 37–63. doi:[10.1016/j.ejop.2006.10.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejop.2006.10.001)  
*General*

Amacher, J., Neuer, S., Anderson, I., & Massana, R. (2009). Molecular approach to determine contributions of the protist community to particle flux. *Deep Sea Research Part I: Oceanographic Research Papers*, 56(12), 2206–2215. doi:[10.1016/j.dsr.2009.08.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2009.08.007)  
*General*

Hillebrand, H., Dürselen, C.-D., Kirschtel, D., Pollinger, U., & Zohary, T. (1999). Biovolume calculation for pelagic and benthic microalgae. *Journal of Phycology*, 35(2), 403–424. doi:[10.1046/j.1529-8817.1999.3520403.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1529-8817.1999.3520403.x)  
*Methods*

Landry, M. R., & Hassett, R. P. (1982). Estimating the grazing impact of marine micro-zooplankton. *Marine Biology*, 67(3), 283–288. doi:10.1007/bf00397668 <https://doi.org/10.1007%2FBF00397668>  
*Methods*

Landry, M. R., Brown, S. L., Rii, Y. M., Selph, K. E., Bidigare, R. R., Yang, E. J., & Simmons, M. P. (2008). Depth-stratified phytoplankton dynamics in Cyclone Opal, a subtropical mesoscale eddy. *Deep Sea Research Part II: Topical Studies in Oceanography*, 55(10-13), 1348–1359. doi:[10.1016/j.dsr2.2008.02.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr2.2008.02.001)  
*General*

Landry, M., Haas, L., & Fagerness, V. (1984). Dynamics of microbial plankton communities: experiments in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 16, 127–133. doi:[10.3354/meps016127](https://doi.org/10.3354/meps016127)

*General*

Lund, J. W. G., Kipling, C., & Le Cren, E. D. (1958). The inverted microscope method of estimating algal numbers and the statistical basis of estimations by counting. *Hydrobiologia*, 11(2), 143–170.

doi:[10.1007/bf00007865](https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00007865) <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00007865>

*Methods*

Menden-Deuer, S., & Lessard, E. J. (2000). Carbon to volume relationships for dinoflagellates, diatoms, and other protist plankton. *Limnology and Oceanography*, 45(3), 569–579. doi:[10.4319/lo.2000.45.3.0569](https://doi.org/10.4319/lo.2000.45.3.0569)

*Methods*

Neuer, S., & Cowles, T. (1994). Protist herbivory in the Oregon upwelling system. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 113, 147–162. doi:[10.3354/meps113147](https://doi.org/10.3354/meps113147)

*General*

Putt, M., & Stoecker, D. K. (1989). An experimentally determined carbon : volume ratio for marine “oligotrichous” ciliates from estuarine and coastal waters. *Limnology and Oceanography*, 34(6), 1097–1103.

doi:[10.4319/lo.1989.34.6.1097](https://doi.org/10.4319/lo.1989.34.6.1097)

*General*

Selph, K. E., Landry, M. R., Taylor, A. G., Yang, E.-J., Measures, C. I., Yang, J., ... Bidigare, R. R. (2011). Spatially-resolved taxon-specific phytoplankton production and grazing dynamics in relation to iron distributions in the Equatorial Pacific between 110 and 140°W. *Deep Sea Research Part II: Topical Studies in Oceanography*, 58(3-4), 358–377. doi:[10.1016/j.dsr2.2010.08.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr2.2010.08.014)

*General*

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## Parameters

| Parameter               | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Units                            |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| cruise_id               | Official cruise identifier e.g. AE1102 = R/V Atlantic Explorer cruise number 1102.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | dimensionless                    |
| cast                    | Cast number.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | dimensionless                    |
| station                 | Station number.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | dimensionless                    |
| location_description    | Description of sampling location.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | dimensionless                    |
| lat                     | Latitude. Positive values = North.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | decimal degrees                  |
| lon                     | Longitude. Positive values = East.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | decimal degrees                  |
| depth                   | Sample depth.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | meters                           |
| taxon                   | Name of the taxonomic group. Codes: H_dinos = Heterotrophic dinoflagellates H_nano = Heterotrophic nanoflagellates Mixo_dino = Mixotrophic dinoflagellates Nano_Photo_Eukaryotes = Nano Phototrophic Eukaryotes Pico_Photo_Eukaryotes = Pico Phototrophic Eukaryotes Photo_Eukaryotes = Phototrophic Eukaryotes | dimensionless                    |
| total_biomass_per_taxon | Total biomass (pg C/mL) at the particular cast and depth for the taxonomic group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | picograms C per milliliter       |
| length                  | Length/diameter (in um).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | micrometers                      |
| width                   | Width/height (in um).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | micrometers                      |
| shape                   | Description of the 3D shape.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | dimensionless                    |
| abundance               | Abundance (cells/mL).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | cells per milliliter             |
| abund_lower_95pcnt_CI   | Upper 95% confidence interval for abundance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | cells per milliliter             |
| abund_upper_95pcnt_CI   | Lower 95% confidence interval for abundance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | cells per milliliter             |
| cells_counted           | Number of cells counted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | dimensionless                    |
| biovolume               | Biovolume (um <sup>3</sup> /mL).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | cubic micrometers per milliliter |
| dino_biomass            | Dinoflagellate biomass (pg C/cell).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | picograms C per cell             |
| diatoms_biomass         | Diatom biomass (pg C/cell).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | picograms C per cell             |
| protists_biomass        | Protist biomass (pg C/cell).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | picograms C per cell             |
| date                    | 2-digit month, 2-digit day, and 4-digit year of sampling. Reported in UTC. Format: mmddYYYY                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | unitless                         |
| experiment_num          | Experiment number.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | dimensionless                    |
| season_year             | Sampling season and year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | text                             |

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## Instruments

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dataset-specific Instrument Name</b> | Fluorescence Microscope Image Analysis System                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Generic Instrument Name</b>          | Fluorescence Microscope Image Analysis System                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Dataset-specific Description</b>     | The organisms were counted using a ZEISS Axioplan Epifluorescence Microscope equipped with a 100x Plan-NEOFLUAR 100x/1.30 oil, objective lens                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Generic Instrument Description</b>   | A Fluorescence (or Epifluorescence) Microscope Image Analysis System uses semi-automated color image analysis to determine cell abundance, dimensions and biovolumes from an Epifluorescence Microscope. An Epifluorescence Microscope (conventional and inverted) includes a camera system that generates enlarged images of prepared samples. The microscope uses excitation ultraviolet light and the phenomena of fluorescence and phosphorescence instead of, or in addition to, reflection and absorption of visible light. |

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dataset-specific Instrument Name</b> | Niskin bottle                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Generic Instrument Name</b>          | Niskin bottle                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Dataset-specific Description</b>     | Samples were collected using 10-Liter Niskin bottles attached to a CTD rosette.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Generic Instrument Description</b>   | A Niskin bottle (a next generation water sampler based on the Nansen bottle) is a cylindrical, non-metallic water collection device with stoppers at both ends. The bottles can be attached individually on a hydrowire or deployed in 12, 24, or 36 bottle Rosette systems mounted on a frame and combined with a CTD. Niskin bottles are used to collect discrete water samples for a range of measurements including pigments, nutrients, plankton, etc. |

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dataset-specific Instrument Name</b> | TD 700 Laboratory Fluorometer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Generic Instrument Name</b>          | Turner Designs 700 Laboratory Fluorometer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Dataset-specific Description</b>     | Chlorophyll a was extracted from seawater (250 ml and 400 ml depending on the dilution), with 90% acetone and measured after 24hrs at 4 degrees C in the dark onboard ship using a TD 700 Laboratory Fluorometer using the non-acidification technique (Welschmeyer 1994).                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Generic Instrument Description</b>   | The TD-700 Laboratory Fluorometer is a benchtop fluorometer designed to detect fluorescence over the UV to red range. The instrument can measure concentrations of a variety of compounds, including chlorophyll-a and fluorescent dyes, and is thus suitable for a range of applications, including chlorophyll, water quality monitoring and fluorescent tracer studies. Data can be output as concentrations or raw fluorescence measurements. |

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## Deployments

AE1102

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58672">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58672</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Platform</b>    | R/V Atlantic Explorer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2011-02-23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2011-03-07                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Description</b> | This cruise was the first in a series of four cruises planned to study the trophic interactions and particle export during the winter season in the Sargasso Sea. The researchers focused on several sampling locations including an anticyclonic eddy, slope waters of the eddy, and repeated visits to the Bermuda Atlantic Time Series (BATS) study site. The research focus for the cruise included phytoplankton production, microzooplankton grazing, mesozooplankton grazing and particle export. This process cruise was designed to quantify stocks and rate processes in the Sargasso Sea food web. Work entailed CTD casts, over the stern deployment of in situ primary production arrays and surface tethered sediment traps. Until 26 November 2012 this cruise was identified by BIOS and R2R as AE-X1101. On 26 November 2012, the cruise ID was corrected to AE1102. Original cruise data are available from the NSF R2R data catalog |

### AE1118

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58934">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58934</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Platform</b>    | R/V Atlantic Explorer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2011-07-22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2011-08-04                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Description</b> | AE1118 was a process cruise aboard the R/V Atlantic Explorer to quantify stocks and rate processes in the Sargasso Sea food web. This was the second in a series of cruises for the Trophic BATS project. On each cruise, sampling was conducted at three stations: the center and edge of a mesoscale eddy and at one station outside of the eddy. Core CTD casts to ~2000 meters and pre-dawn 'Productivity' CTD casts were made at each station. Original cruise data are available from the NSF R2R data catalog. |

### AE1206

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58935">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58935</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Platform</b>    | R/V Atlantic Explorer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2012-03-14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2012-03-23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Description</b> | AE1206 was the third in a series of four cruises for the Trophic BATS project. On each cruise, sampling was conducted at three stations: the center and edge of a mesoscale eddy and at one station outside of the eddy. Core CTD casts to ~2000 meters and pre-dawn 'Productivity' CTD casts were made at each station. Cruise information and original data are available from the NSF R2R data catalog. |

### AE1219

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58936">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/58936</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Platform</b>    | R/V Atlantic Explorer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2012-07-19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2012-07-31                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Description</b> | AE1219 was the final cruise in a series of four for the Trophic BATS project. On each cruise, sampling was conducted at three stations: the center and edge of a mesoscale eddy and at one station outside of the eddy. Core CTD casts to ~2000 meters and pre-dawn 'Productivity' CTD casts were made at each station. Cruise information and original data are available from the NSF R2R data catalog. |

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## Project Information

### Plankton Community Composition and Trophic Interactions as Modifiers of Carbon Export in the Sargasso Sea (Trophic BATS)

**Coverage:** Sargasso Sea, BATS site

Fluxes of particulate carbon from the surface ocean are greatly influenced by the size, taxonomic composition and trophic interactions of the resident planktonic community. Large and/or heavily-ballasted phytoplankton such as diatoms and coccolithophores are key contributors to carbon export due to their high sinking rates and direct routes of export through large zooplankton. The potential contributions of small, unballasted phytoplankton, through aggregation and/or trophic re-packaging, have been recognized more recently. This recognition comes as direct observations in the field show unexpected trends. In the Sargasso Sea, for example, shallow carbon export has increased in the last decade but the corresponding shift in phytoplankton community composition during this time has not been towards larger cells like diatoms. Instead, the abundance of the picoplanktonic cyanobacterium, *Synechococcus*, has increased significantly. The trophic pathways that link the increased abundance of *Synechococcus* to carbon export have not been characterized. These observations helped to frame the overarching research question, "How do plankton size, community composition and trophic interactions modify carbon export from the euphotic zone". Since small phytoplankton are responsible for the majority of primary production in oligotrophic subtropical gyres, the trophic interactions that include them must be characterized in order to achieve a mechanistic understanding of the function of the biological pump in the oligotrophic regions of the ocean.

This requires a complete characterization of the major organisms and their rates of production and consumption. Accordingly, the research objectives are: 1) to characterize (qualitatively and quantitatively) trophic interactions between major plankton groups in the euphotic zone and rates of, and contributors to, carbon export and 2) to develop a constrained food web model, based on these data, that will allow us to better understand current and predict near-future patterns in export production in the Sargasso Sea.

The investigators will use a combination of field-based process studies and food web modeling to quantify rates of carbon exchange between key components of the ecosystem at the Bermuda Atlantic Time-series Study (BATS) site. Measurements will include a novel DNA-based approach to characterizing and quantifying planktonic contributors to carbon export. The well-documented seasonal variability at BATS and the occurrence of mesoscale eddies will be used as a natural laboratory in which to study ecosystems of different structure. This study is unique in that it aims to characterize multiple food web interactions and carbon export simultaneously and over similar time and space scales. A key strength of the proposed research is also the tight connection and feedback between the data collection and modeling components.

Characterizing the complex interactions between the biological community and export production is critical for predicting changes in phytoplankton species dominance, trophic relationships and export production that might occur under scenarios of climate-related changes in ocean circulation and mixing. The results from this research may also contribute to understanding of the biological mechanisms that drive current regional to basin scale variability in carbon export in oligotrophic gyres.



## Program Information

### Ocean Carbon and Biogeochemistry (OCB)

**Website:** <http://us-ocb.org/>

**Coverage:** Global

The Ocean Carbon and Biogeochemistry (OCB) program focuses on the ocean's role as a component of the global Earth system, bringing together research in geochemistry, ocean physics, and ecology that inform on and advance our understanding of ocean biogeochemistry. The overall program goals are to promote, plan, and coordinate collaborative, multidisciplinary research opportunities within the U.S. research community and with international partners. Important OCB-related activities currently include: the Ocean Carbon and Climate Change (OCCC) and the North American Carbon Program (NACP); U.S. contributions to IMBER, SOLAS, CARBOOCEAN; and numerous U.S. single-investigator and medium-size research projects funded by U.S. federal agencies including NASA, NOAA, and NSF.

The scientific mission of OCB is to study the evolving role of the ocean in the global carbon cycle, in the face of environmental variability and change through studies of marine biogeochemical cycles and associated ecosystems.

The overarching OCB science themes include improved understanding and prediction of: 1) oceanic uptake and release of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases and 2) environmental sensitivities of biogeochemical cycles, marine ecosystems, and interactions between the two.

The OCB Research Priorities (updated January 2012) include: ocean acidification; terrestrial/coastal carbon fluxes and exchanges; climate sensitivities of and change in ecosystem structure and associated impacts on biogeochemical cycles; mesopelagic ecological and biogeochemical interactions; benthic-pelagic feedbacks on biogeochemical cycles; ocean carbon uptake and storage; and expanding low-oxygen conditions in the coastal and open oceans.

## Funding

| Funding Source                                           | Award                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <a href="#">NSF Division of Ocean Sciences (NSF OCE)</a> | <a href="#">OCE-1030476</a> |