

Microbial controls on biogeochemical cycles in permafrost ecosystems

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Project Goals: The permafrost carbon reservoirs are currently protected from microbial decomposition by frozen conditions. Upon permafrost thaw microbial metabolism leads to decomposition of soil organic matter, substantially impacting the cycling of nutrients and significantly affecting the Arctic landscape. This project use state of the art molecular techniques to resolve complex microbial processes governing the biogeochemical cycles in arctic soils and permafrost to better inform efforts to access uncertainties surrounding ecosystem responses.

Permafrost microbial communities are complex, diverse, and active at subzero temperatures. While carbon turnover at depth is proposed to be slower than surface, especially the fate of carbon in deep permafrost, which is currently protected from the warming climate, is uncertain. Permafrost microbiome is a seed bank of mostly novel organisms that have a diverse and broad metabolic potential. The microbial response to thaw in arctic environments is not uniform and the relationship between permafrost microbiomes and greenhouse gas emissions is not well understood. Following thaw, redistribution of water is a key event that conditions the permafrost for microbial decomposition. We initiated batch-scale permafrost incubation experiments dry, natural, and saturated moisture states and under microaerophilic or anaerobic headspaces. We couple omics methods with analysis of soil chemistry via synchrotron Fourier transform infrared spectral imaging at the Berkeley Infrared Structural Biology beamline of the Advanced Light Source. Analysis showed that variety of organic compounds and metabolites were accumulated in thawed permafrost soils. Especially under saturated conditions while carbohydrates were depleted, dry soils accumulated aliphatic compounds. We found strong trends that under dry conditions *Dormibacteria* and *Chloroflexi* were able to survive over multiple years and retain carbon stocks as carbohydrates and microbial biomass. In contrast saturated conditions gave rise to *Actinobacteria*. This project use field observations, laboratory manipulations, and multi-omics approaches to examine how microbial processes and hydrology interact during permafrost thaw Alaska in order to determine how these factors drive biogeochemical cycles in different arctic soils.

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