Analysis of citizen science water quality monitoring in Key Largo, Florida.

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# Summary/Abstract

*Write a summary of your project.*

# Introduction

## General Background Information

Water quality assessment is a core component of experimental design in a wide range of scientific disciplines . Water condition is imperative to environmental and human health, both as a direct concern such as in the case of aquatic organisms or indirectly such as in the case of irrigation of crops(Precht & Miller, 2007). The utility of water quality data is due to the fact that key parameters can provide information on the baseline health conditon of a water system at a relatively low cost in sampling methodology. The efficacy and cost of water sampling has allowed the techniques to become ubiquitous across the field of environmental science and has become a core component of ecosystem health assessment(Bertollo, 2008). The relative ease of sampling and low cost of materials is particularly useful for research requiring a large number of samples, such as in ecosystem monitoring(Bertollo, 2008).

Ecosystem monitoring is the measurement of changes that occur within an ecosystem over time(Bliss, 2001). Monitoring studies gather data on specific health indicators of interest to a locale and use these data to assess long and short-term changes within an ecosystem. Water quality is one of the most common monitoring indicators due to the high level of ecosystem response to changes in abiotic conditions, and the accessibility of methods and equipment. Worldwide programs have been established to gather water quality data though the power of citizen science and outreach. Though a vast amount of data has been collected from various programs, much of the analysis done has been conducted at a state or country scale. Numerous data sets exist at smaller scales which can provide useful information on the local microhabitats of various water systems that may be overlooked when assessed at a larger scale. Here we assess the marine water quality conditions of Key Largo, Florida from 2016 to 2019 through the use of citizen science collected data.

Key Largo is the northernmost island in the Florida Keys archipelago, and the self-proclaimed “Diving Capital of the World.” The waters surrounding Key Largo support three major aquatic habitats: seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and coral reefs. Though distinct in community structure, these three ecosystems exist in delicate balance with one another by means of water-mediating ecosystem functions. Key Largo is surrounded on all sides by two major bodies of water: the Florida bay which rests on the Gulf of Mexico side of the island, and the Atlantic Ocean. Florida Bay is a relatively small body of water that extends from the end of mainland Florida and boarders the coast of the Upper Florida Keys. The bayside is a relatively shallow enclosed body of water with a dynamic range of abiotic conditions favorable to seagrass and mangrove habitats. The oceanside boasts a substantially deeper and larger body of water with a relatively stable range of abiotic conditions favorable to coral reef habitats.

The health of these three major aquatic ecosystems is dependent on the stability of the abiotic conditions of associated waters. Though each of these aquatic habitats are closely associated to the island of Key Largo, chemical and geographical conditions differ greatly between systems and thus support considerably different community structures. Adequate monitoring of these coastal water systems is imperative to the continued environmental and economic health of the island. Citizen science data collection enables researchers to collect information at a substantially larger scale than would be possible alone. The analysis of these data will be used to establish a baseline health condition for various water bodies associated with Key Largo; and will produce data visuals to enrich future citizen science programs.

## Description of data and data source

These data are water quality measurements collected in Key Largo, Florida by the Marine Resources Development Foundation from 2016 to 2019. The Marine Resources Development Foundation is an environmental education non-profit that provides an immersive experience into the field of marine science for students ranging from fourth grade to undergraduates. Marinelab students take a variety of courses to educate them about the local ecosystems and complement their laboratory and classroom time with daily field trips to the ecosystem of interest. Many courses within the Marinelab curriculum contain integrative data collection programs which task students with the collection of citizen science data on the health of local ecosystems. All data is collected in the field on paper data sheets and is entered into a master raw database by a Marinelab staff members. Specific subsets of citizen science data collected through the programs are passed onto other agencies for further processing based on individual need and interest.

These data are raw water quality data collected from various sampling sites frequented by Marinelab vessels. Water quality data is characterized by 11 distinct variables: date, time, location, instructor name, group name, pH, ammonia, dissolved oxygen, water temperature, salinity, and equipment. The variables: date, time, location, instructor name, group name, and equipment are all clerical data which provides information on the measuring techniques and site characteristics of a sample. The variables: pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, and ammoina are water quality parameters used to assess the abiotic conditions of the sample site. The Marine Resources Development Foundation has a desire to learn the large-scale patterns of the local water quality to better educate students enrolled in the program. Though this data has been collected for some time, no formal analysis of the data has ever been conducted at a large-scale with the master data.

## Questions/Hypotheses to be addressed

*Question 1: Ocean Verses Bay*

What are the major differences in water quality parameters between Oceanside and Bayside site locations?

*Question 2: Change Over Time*

Have the water quality conditions of highly visited sites changed over the three years of observation, and can we see impacts of hurricane Irma on the expected conditions?

*Question 3: Seasonal Change*

Are there visible seasonal changes in the abiotic conditions of the water?

*Question 4: Citizen Science Data Efficacy*

Is citizen science data accurate enough to capture large-scale environmental trends and is the data specific enough to characterize different aquatic habitat types.

*Objective 5: Promoting Future Citizen Science*

Develop a script for the immediate processing of data collected by groups actively in the Marinelab program. The goal of this objective is to write a ready-to-use script that will produce scatter plots of the five water quality parameters to compare and contrast oceanside and bayside locations. These figures will then be used to show students the results of their data collection over the course of their time at Marinelab. The script will be tailored to accept a specifically formatted .xlsx file to ensure the data can be run with minimal to no cleaning required. Detailed instructions for data entry into the .xlsx file, and instructions for loading and running the script will be included in a README.md file in the folder.

## Methods

All data was collected by students or instructors of the Marinelab environmental education program. All collectors are required to complete a one-hour training program to familiarize themselves with the testing materials and data recording before they are permitted to work in the field. Data is collected in the field at various sampling locations dictated by the needs of the program, accessibility of location, and weather conditions. On site, a grab sample of water is collected and brought onto the vessel for testing. Abiotic conditions are measured immediately following collection and scored onto a paper record sheet. All measures are taken using semiquantative testing equipment or with a YSI Sonde. Temperature is measured in Celsius using a standard thermometer attached to a string to ensure body heat does not skew the data. Salinity is measured with a standard hydrometer in ppt. Dissolved Oxygen is measured using a colormetric ampoule analysis in mg/L. Ammonia and pH are both measured using standardized test kits contiaing test strips and reagent solution respectively. All data sheets are collected and entered into the master database upon return to shore.

Data will be analyzed using R Studio software and the following packages: #####LIST ALL PACKAGES######. Univariate analysis will be used to produce a profile for each of the major sampling sites frequented throughout the study. This profile will detail the average value and range of the five abiotic conditions of interest to be compared in bivariate analysis. Bivariate analysis will be used to compare different water quality parameters between sample sites. In particular, comparisons will be used to establish the difference in the abiotic conditions of oceanside and bayside sampling locations.

## Data Acquisition

These data were acquired from the Marinelab citizen science master database. The database is privately maintained by the Marine Resources Development Foundation and is not readily available online. Data is primarily used as a tool to enrich scientific education in the Marinelab program; however data may be distributed for analysis at the discretion of the director of the program. This analysis was conducted under the permission of the current Marinelab director Sarah Egner, and the resulting analysis will be used for the enrichment of future programs.

## Data import and cleaning

A detailed description of data import, cleaning, and exploratory analysis can be found in the supplementary files as follows. Data import and cleaning is located in folder titled code, the subfolder processing code, and the file WQprocessing. Exploratory analysis is located in the folder code, subfolder analysis code, and is split into two files Exploratory\_Data\_Analysis\_Location which explores variables island\_side and site\_type and Exploratory\_Data\_Analysis\_Seasonal which explores data seasonality and changes across time. All processing and anlysis files are available in both Rmd and docx formats.

## Univariate analysis

Exploratory analysis of the cleaned water quality dataset shows general trends across all parameters measured and identifies specific aspects of the code that warrent deeper analysis.

The first variables explored will be collectively refrred to as the location variables, as they provide site specific information of the sampling locations that is understandable to inividuals that are not familar with the specific sites by name. Loaction variables explored consisted of island\_side and site\_type. Island\_side refers to the specific side of the island the sampling site is located and consists of two categories: oceanside (Atlantic Ocean) and bayside (Gulf of Mexico). Site\_type defines the specific type of ecosystem the site represents and consists of three categories: coral reef, seagrass/mangroves, and path reef/hardbottom. The thee site categories are distinguished by distance from shore, seagrass/mangrove represent near shore sites, path reef/hardbottom are mid-shore, and coral reefs are offshore locations.

Notable location patterns were observed in both salinity and temperature parameters for both island\_side and site\_type. Oceanside sites typically showed a reduced range of temperature and salinity measures, whereas bayside sites were distinctly dynamic. In terms of site\_type, seagrass/mangrove sites generally exhibited a wider range of temperature and salinity, whereas coral reefs and patch reefs/hardbottom sites were less variable. The following trends can be seen in figures 1-4 below.

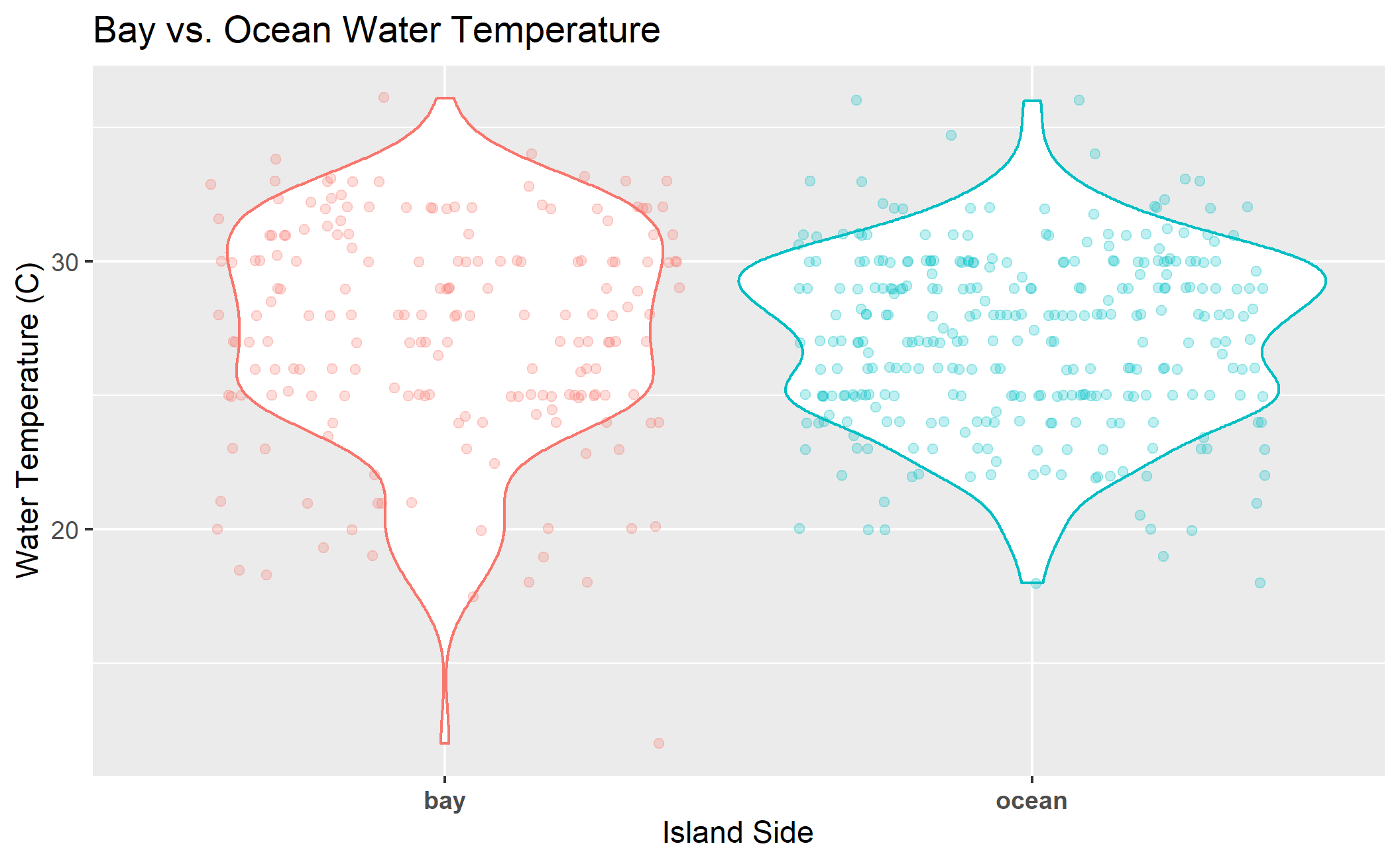


Figure 1: Distribution of water temperature (C) for bayside and oceanside site locations.

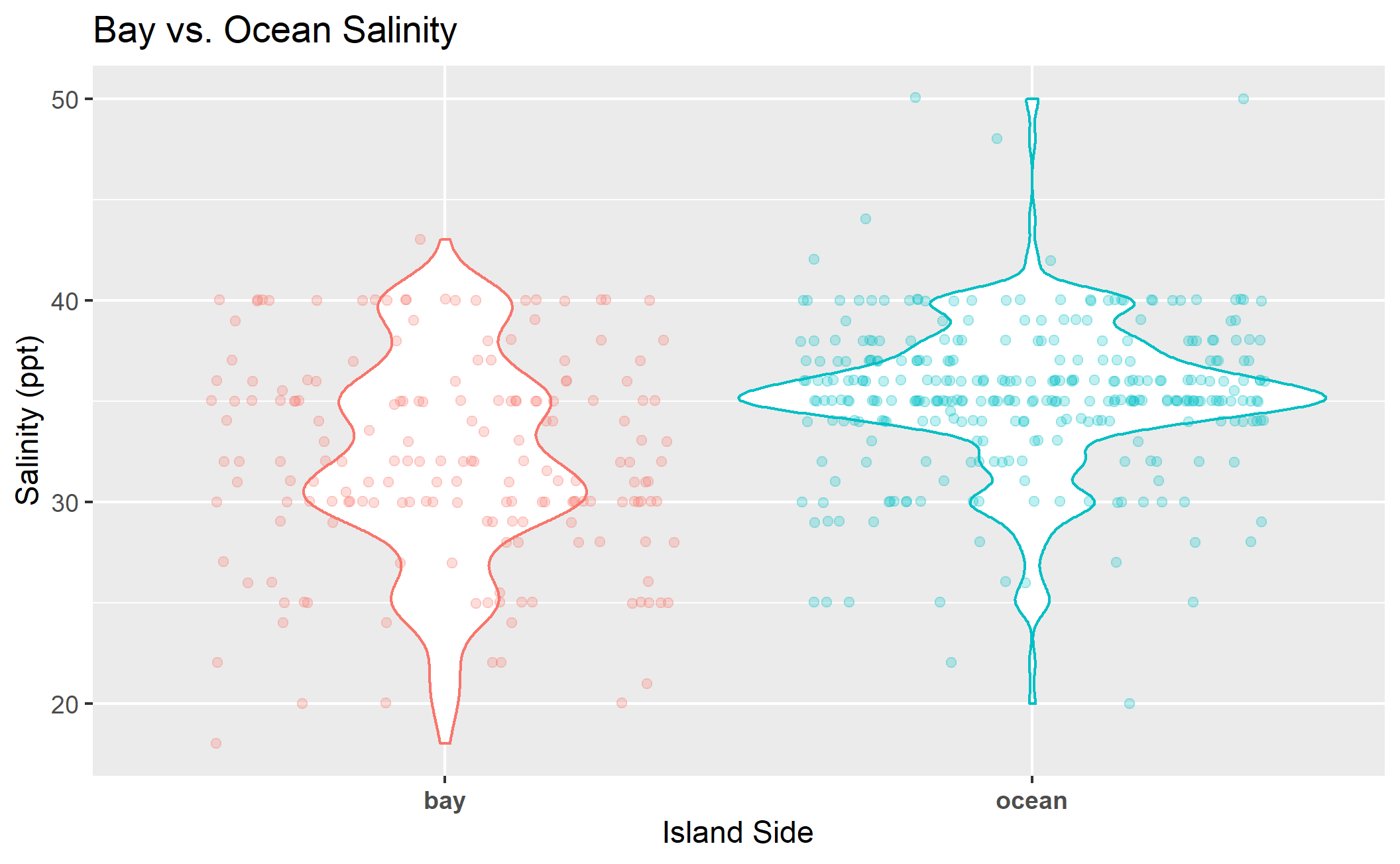


Figure 2: Distribution of salinity (ppt) for bayside and oceanside site locations.

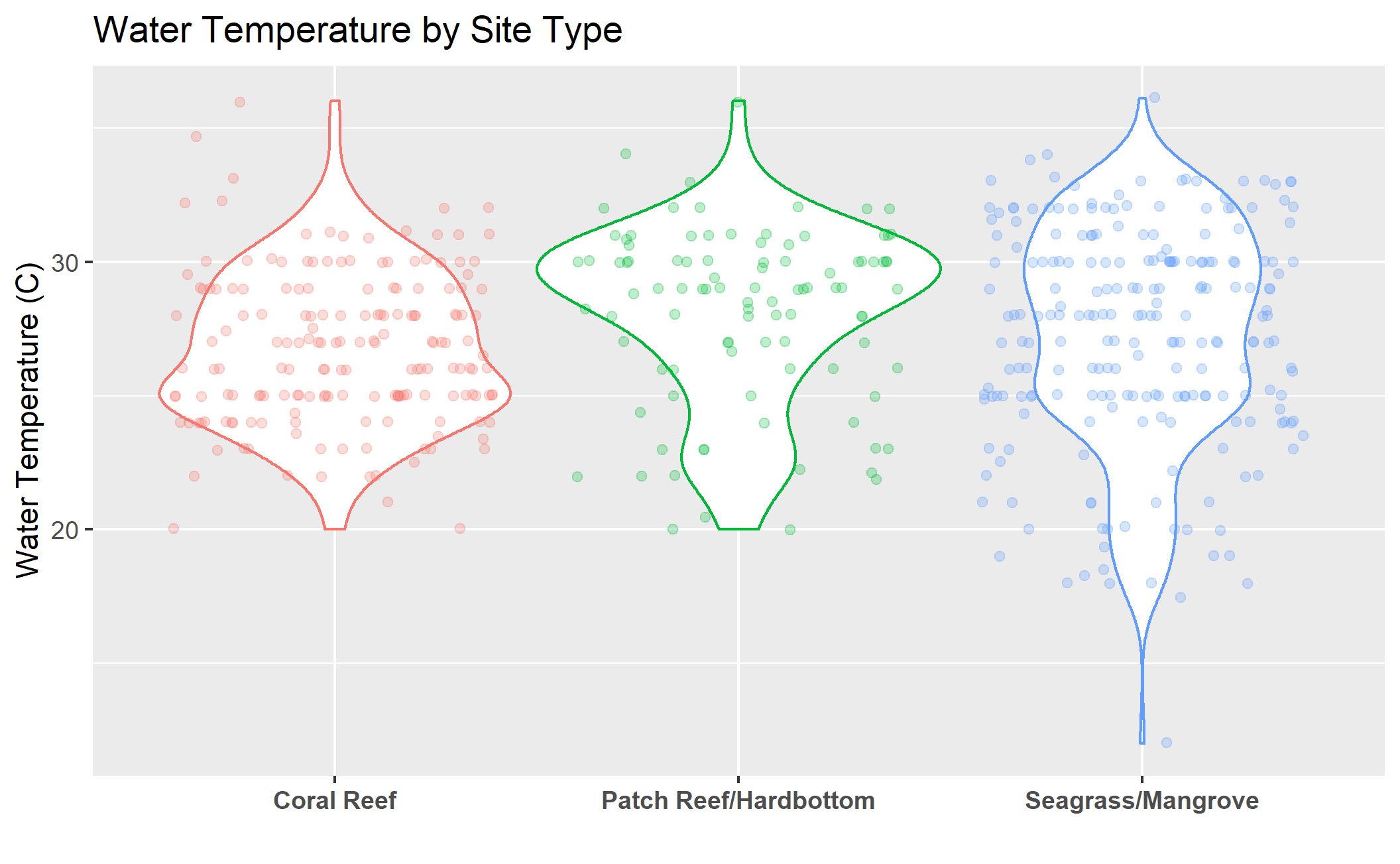


Figure 3: Distribution of water temperature (C) for Coral Reef, Seagrass/Mangrove, and Patch Reef/Hardbottom site types.

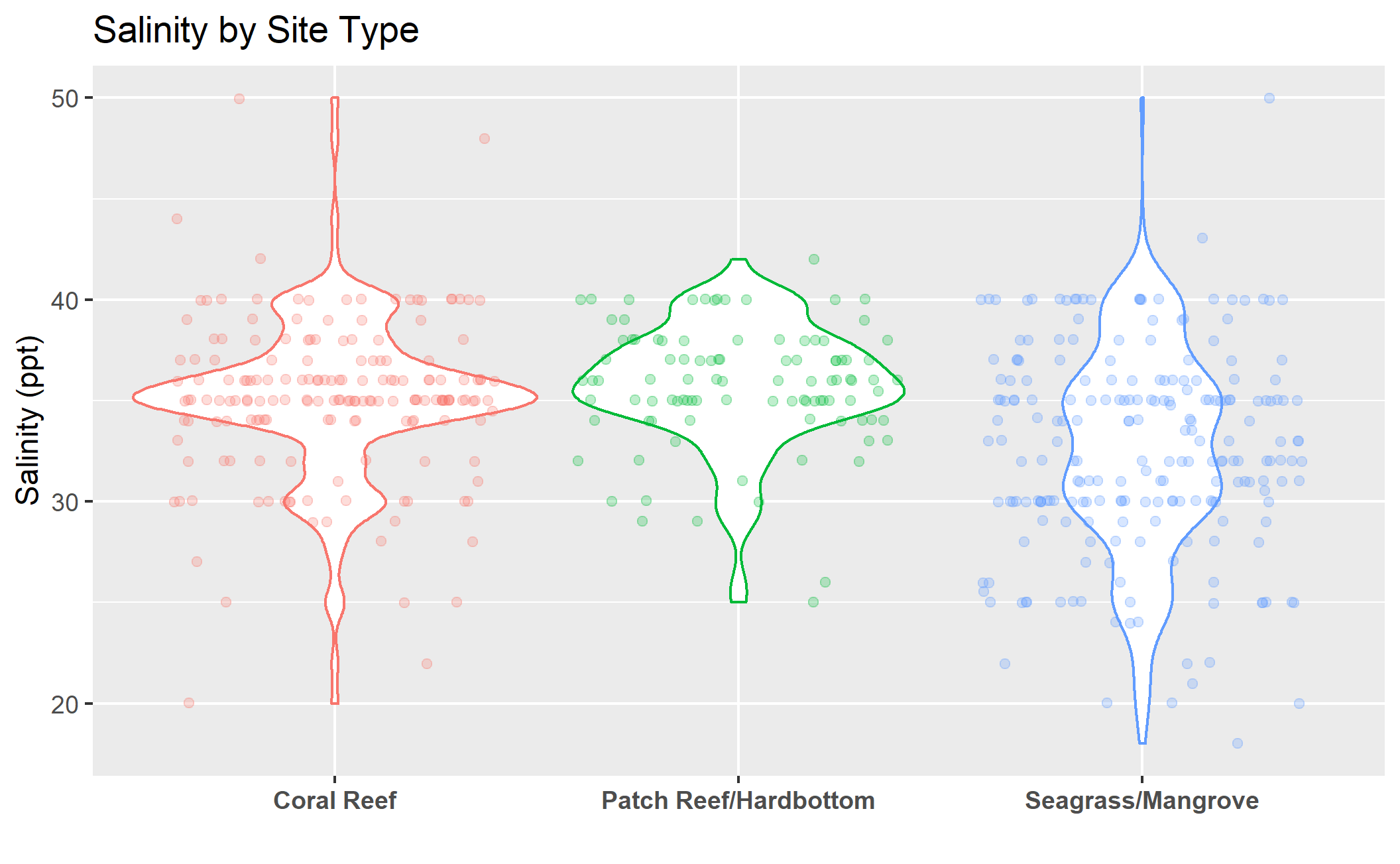


Figure 4: Distribution of salinity (ppt) for Coral Reef, Seagrass/Mangrove, and Patch Reef/Hardbottom site types.

The scond half of the exploratory data analysis was focused on the seasonal data associated with the measured observations. Each water quality parameter was averaged and plotted against the total time of the study to determine seasonal fluctuations and look for abiotic impacts of Hurrican Irma which occurred in September 2017. Ammonia showed a steady average spread with minor seasonal variation and a large spike in the fall of 2017 consistent with Hurricane Irma landfall. pH showed a range of values with no discernable seasonal trends. A drop was indicated in pH following Hirrican Irma, however the decline is consistent with previous fluctuations. Salinity showed a moderate seasonal trend with a sharp decrease following Hurricane Irma. Dissolved oxygen showed steady seasonal fluctuations with a slightly lower dip following Hurricane Irma landfall. Water temperature showed a consistent pattern of seasonal fluctuation across the four years of study. It should be noted that despite the apparent alignment of abiotic changes in relation to Hurricane Irma landfall, substantially fewer data was gathered in the months following the storm compared to other years due to the unsafe conditions of water travel.



Figure 5: Annual fluctuation of water quality parameters in Key Largo, Florida from January 2016 to August 2019.

## Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis investigates the deeper associations of the five water quality parameters as well as details the specifics of seasonal variation among the parameters.

Analysis of the associations between each of the five water quality parameters show no discernable associations between variables that are distinct from the results of the above univariate analysis. The various patterns associated with island side and site type can be visualized in the bivariate comparisions of parameters, however no novel correlations were observed. All bivariate analysis figures can be viewed in the supplementary data folder of the project.

Bivariate analysis permitted the in depth visualization of all five water quality parameters across the annual time scale allowing for a detailed view of seasonal water conditions.

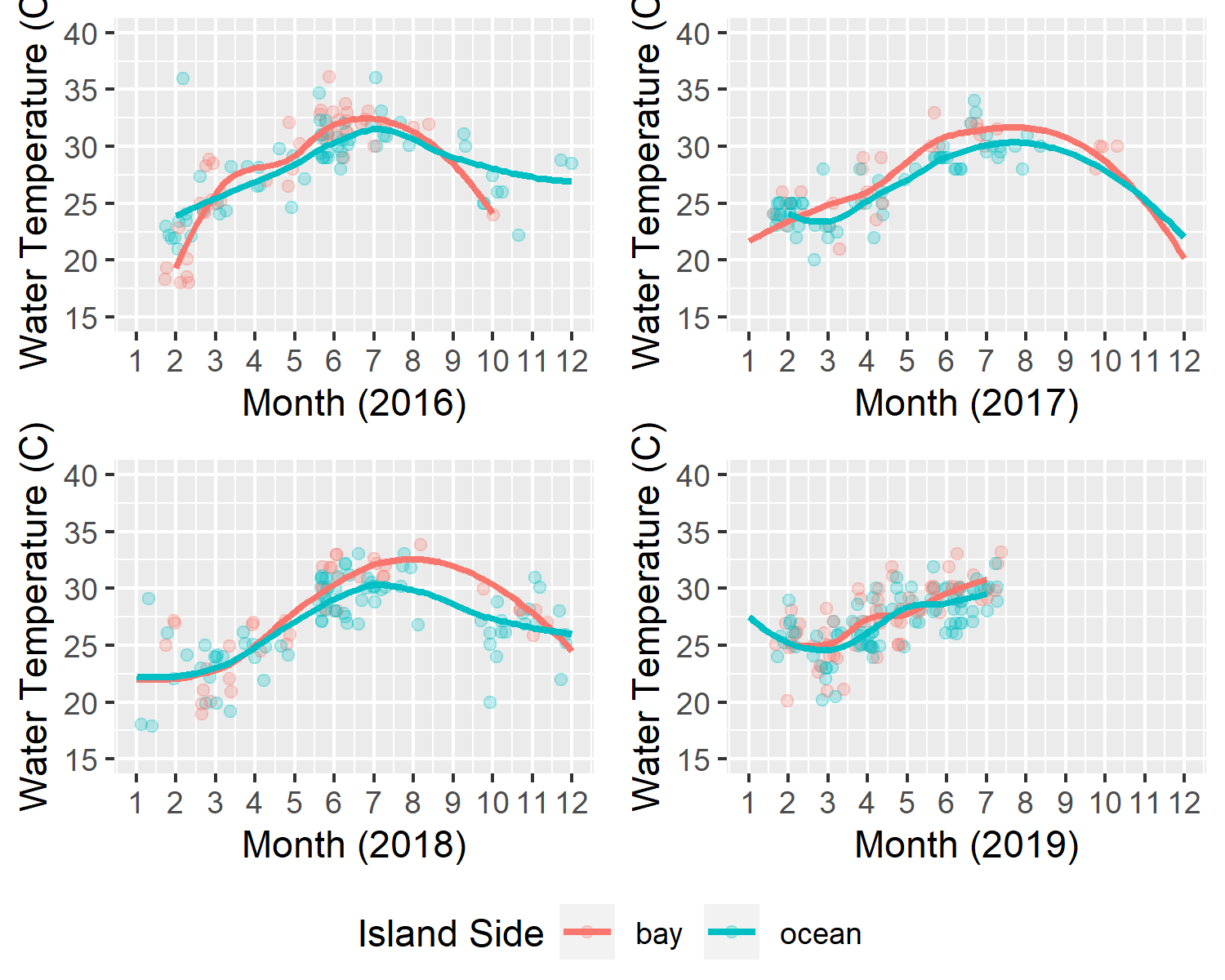


Figure 6: Seasonal water temperature (C) of ocean and bayside site locations in Key Largo, Florida.

Analysis of water temperature showed distinct seasonal patterns of temperature rise an fall consistent with cooler and warmer months of the year. For all four years of study, bayside site locations showed a greater temperature range when compared to oceanside sites, this finding is consistent with univariate visualizations.

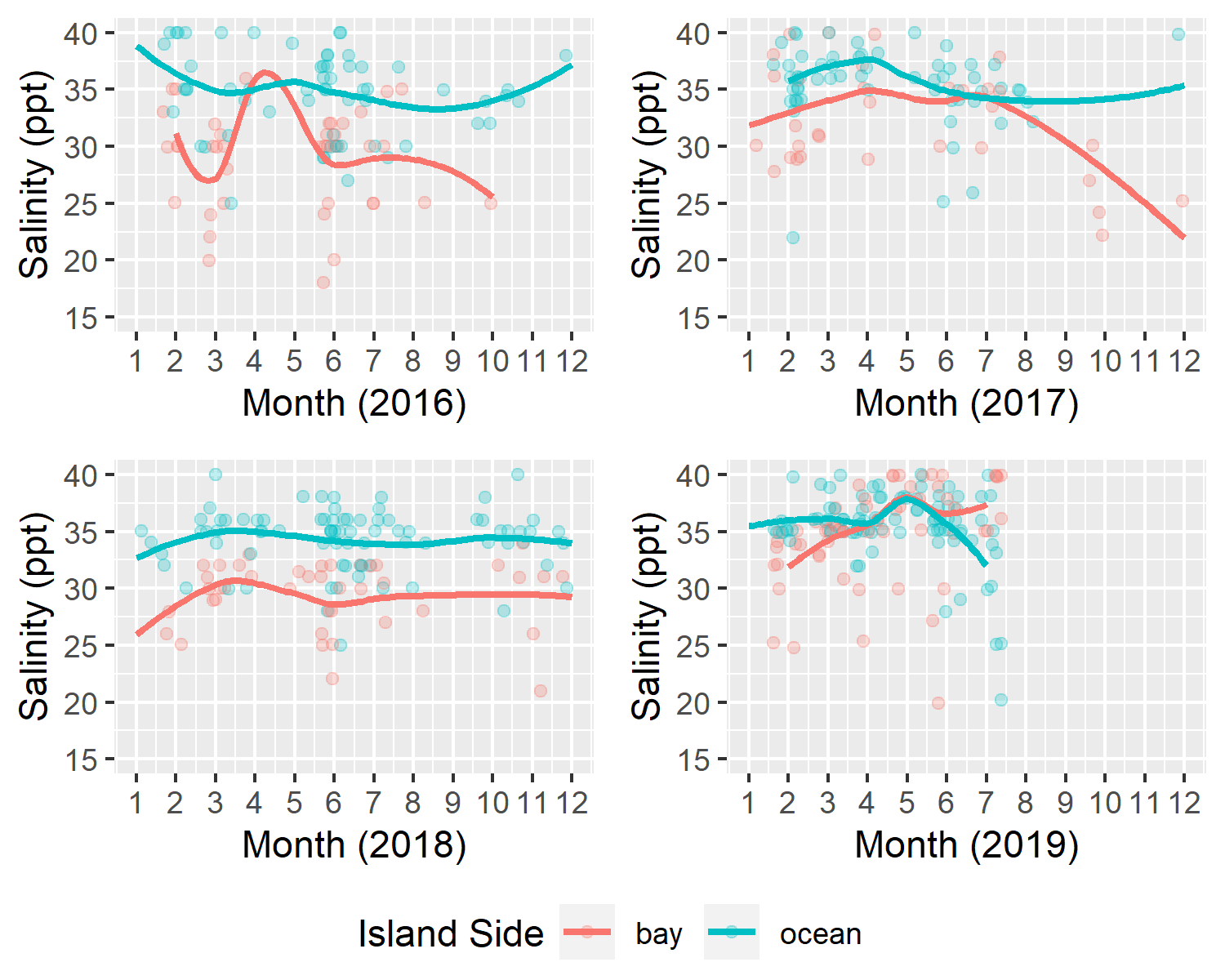


Figure 7: Seasonal salinity levels (ppt) of ocean and bayside site locations in Key Largo, Florida.

Analysis of salinity showed a distinct seperation of bayside and oceanside waters with salinity typically greater in the ocean and reduced in the bay. Bayside site locations showed a much wider range of salinity conditions whereas the ocean was relatively stenohaline. There is a distinct jump in the salinity of bayside site locations in 2016 and 2019 associated with the months of March and April. 2017 showed a distinctive drop in the salinity of the bay associated with the month of September.

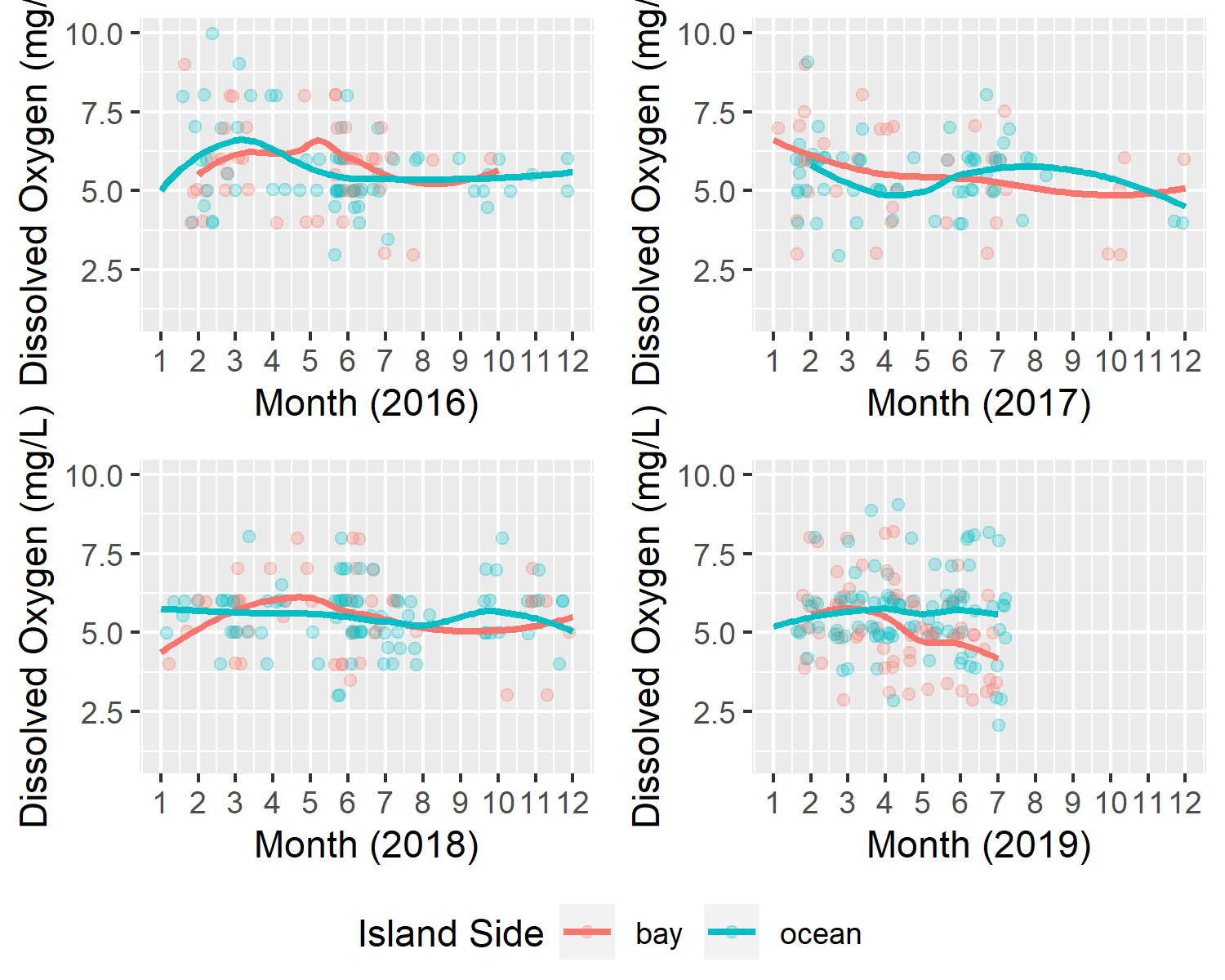


Figure 8: Seasonal dissolved oxygen levels (mg/L) of ocean and bayside site locations in Key Largo, Florida.

Analysis of dissolved oxygen did not reveal any distinct seasonal patterns in the oxygen levels of Key Largo waters. Bayside sites typically showed a lower minimum dissolved oxygen level, whereas the max was variable between the two island sides.

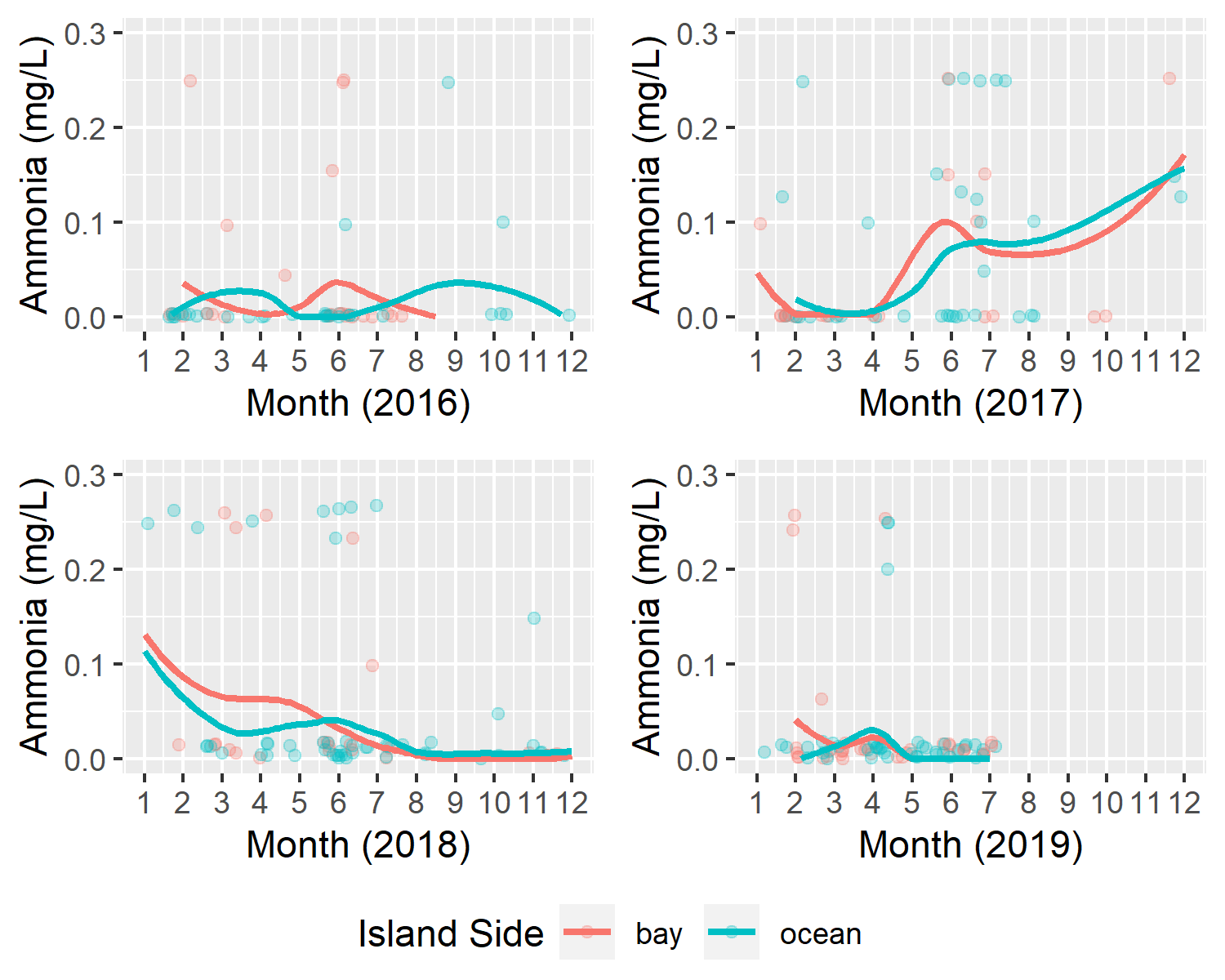


Figure 9: Seasonal ammonia levels (mg/L) of ocean and bayside site locations in Key Largo, Florida.

Ammonia analysis did not show any consistent seasonal fluctuation patterns across all years of measure. Levels on both the bayside and oceanside remain relatively low through the course of study, however there is a large spike in 2017 near the month of September.

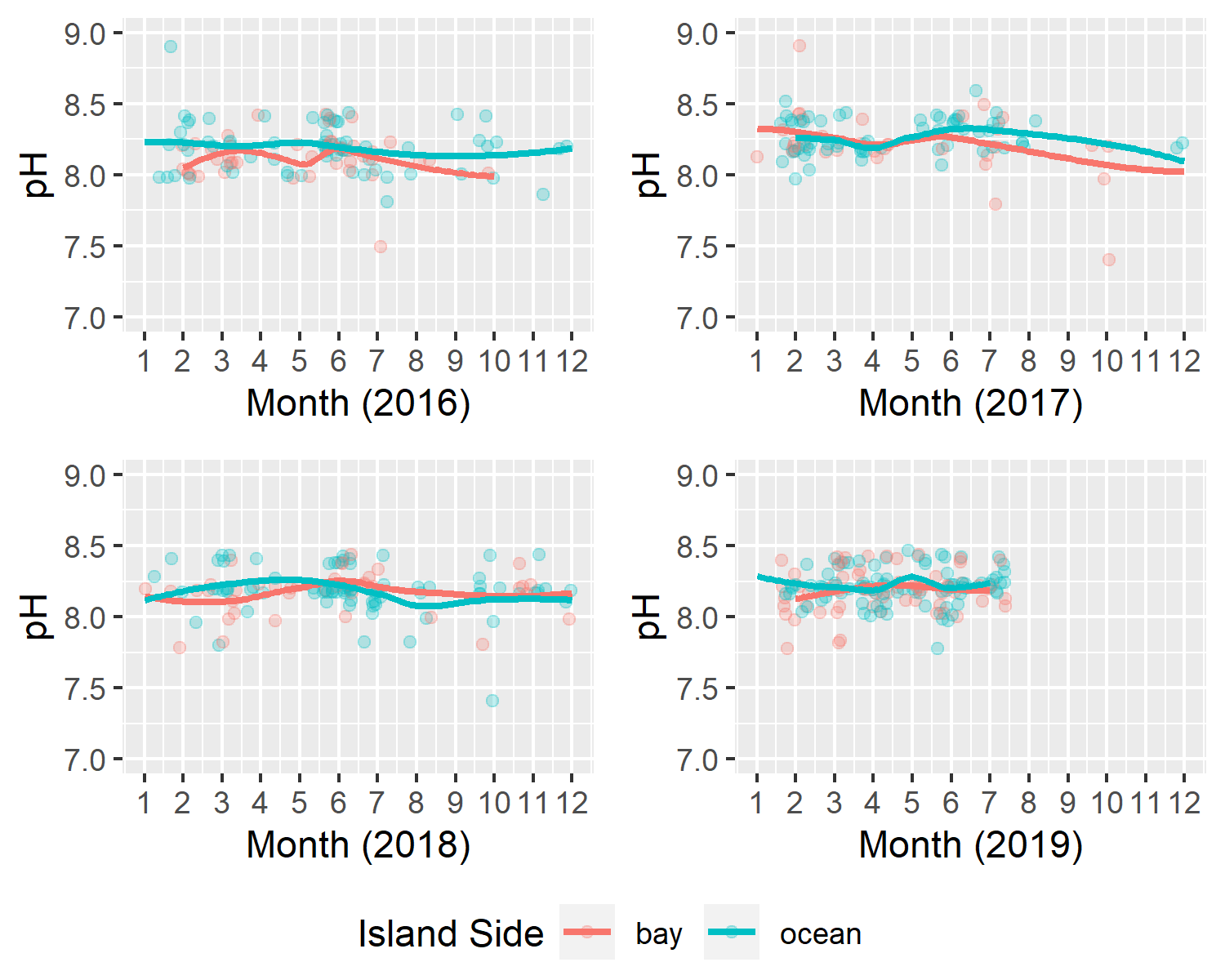


Figure 10: Seasonal pH levels of ocean and bayside site locations in Key Largo, Florida.

Analysis of pH levels showed no discernable seasonal fluctuations. pH remained relatively constant at both bayside and oceanside site locations. The minimum and maximum pH levels did not show any distinct patterns between island sides.

## Hurricane Irma Analysis

Hurricane Irma analysis investigated the specific impacts of hurricane Irma landfall on the five water quality parameters measured in this study. Hurricane Irma made landfall on September 10, 2017. Figures in this analysis represent continious time data from the start of 2017 to the end of 2018 to allow visualization of the acute and subacute effects of hurricane landfall.

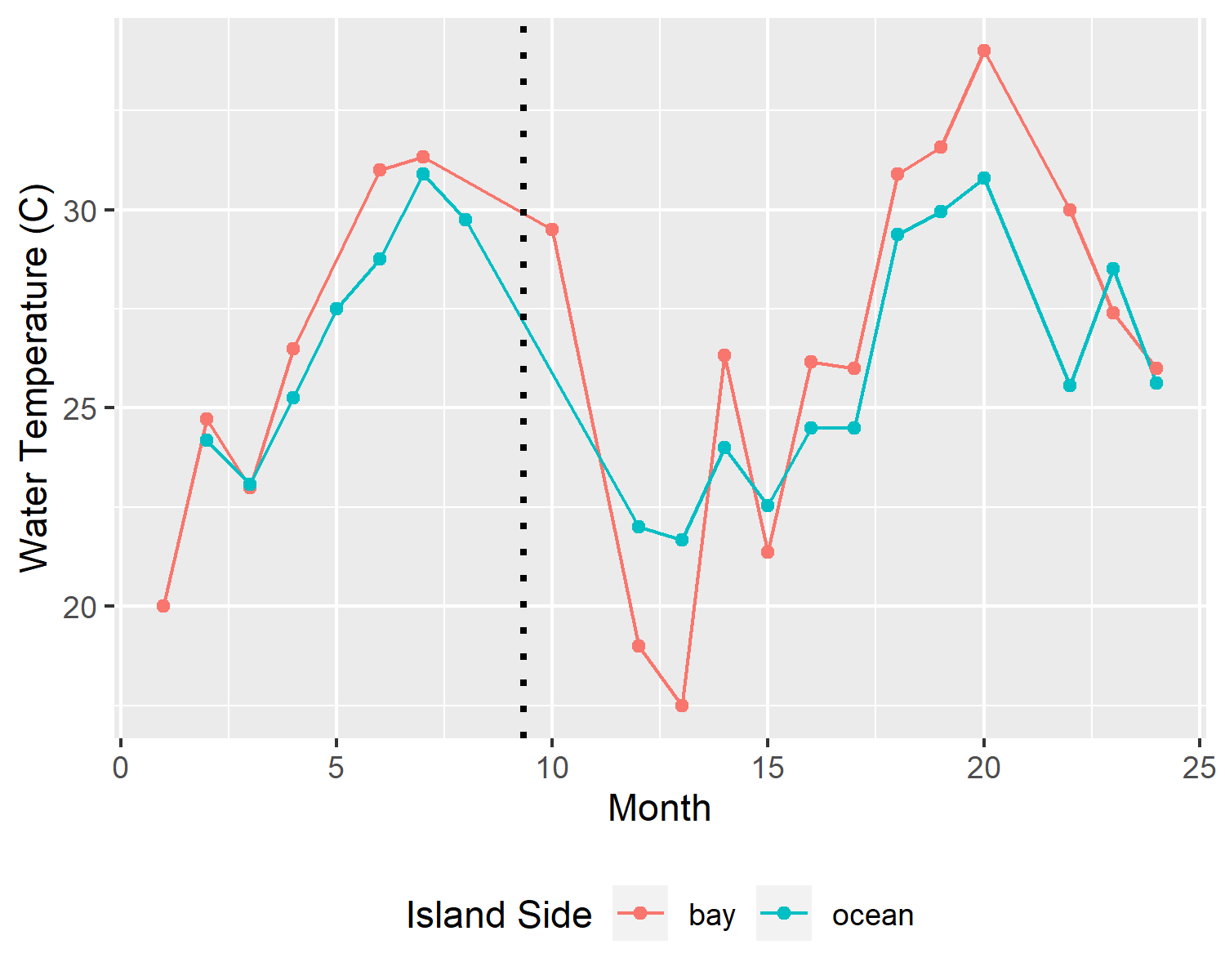


Figure 11: Influence of Hurricane Irma landfall on the mean water temperatures (C) of ocean and bayside waters of Key Largo, Florida. Hurricane Irma landfall occured on September 10, 2017 (indicated by dashed line).

Water temperature associated with Irma landfall showed a notable drop in the months following the storm. This drop was largest for bayside site locations. IT should be noted this decrease is consistent with the timing of standard seasonal fluctuation of water temperature in the Florida Keys.

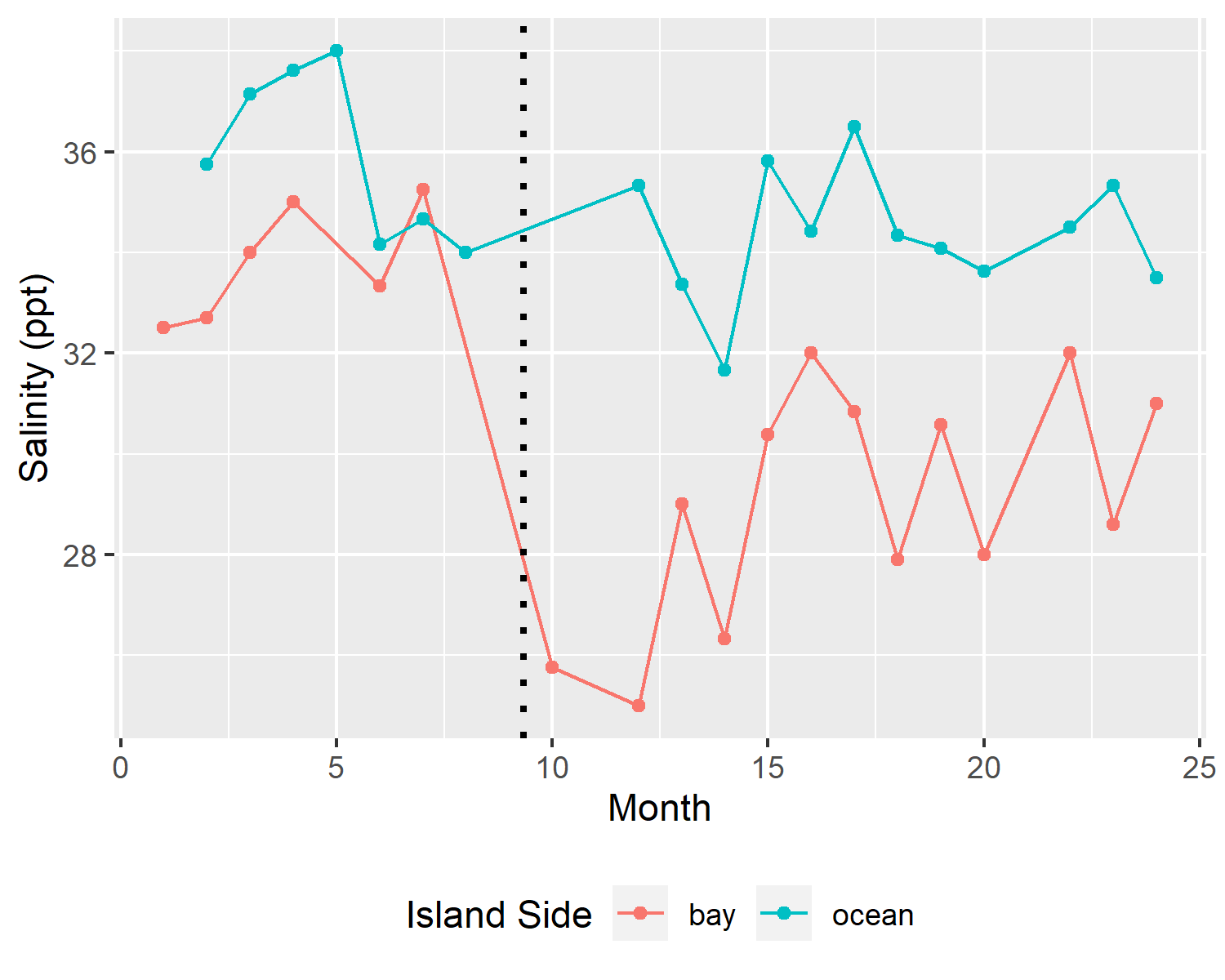


Figure 12: Influence of Hurricane Irma landfall on the mean salinity levels (ppt) of ocean and bayside waters in Key Largo, Florida. Hurricane Irma landfall occured on September 10, 2017 (indicated by dashed line).

Salinity levels associated with hurricane landfall showed a distinctive decrease for bayside site locations. The mean salinity of the ocean however remained relatively constant following the storm.

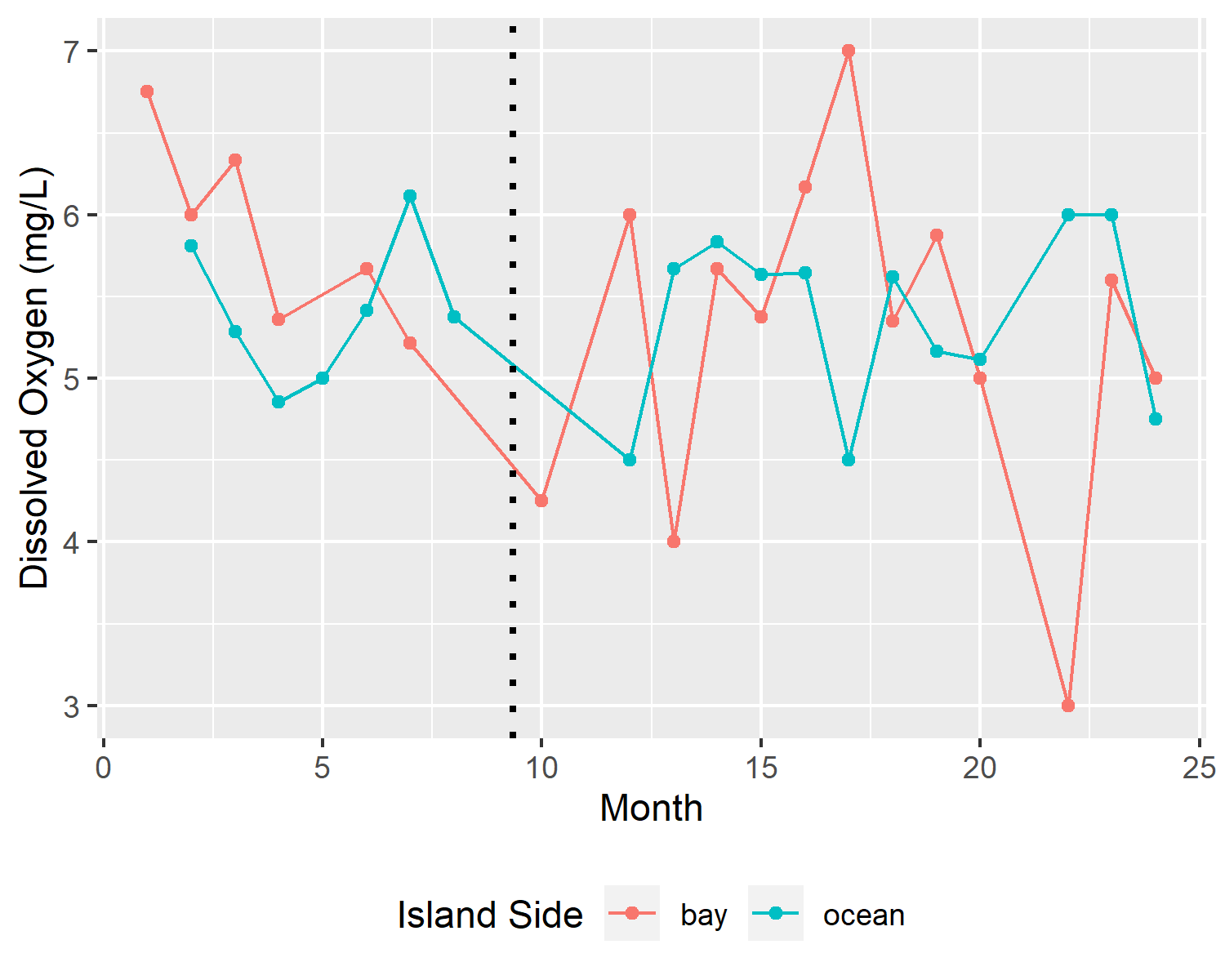


Figure 13: Influence of Hurricane Irma landfall on the mean dissolved oxygen levels (mg/L) of ocean and bayside waters in Key Largo, Florida. Hurricane Irma landfall occured on September 10, 2017 (indicated by dashed line).

Dissolved oygen associated with hurricane landfall did not show any notable changes for both bayside and oceanside site locatons. There is a distinct decrease in the mean dissolved oxygen for the bay observed in the latter months of 2018.

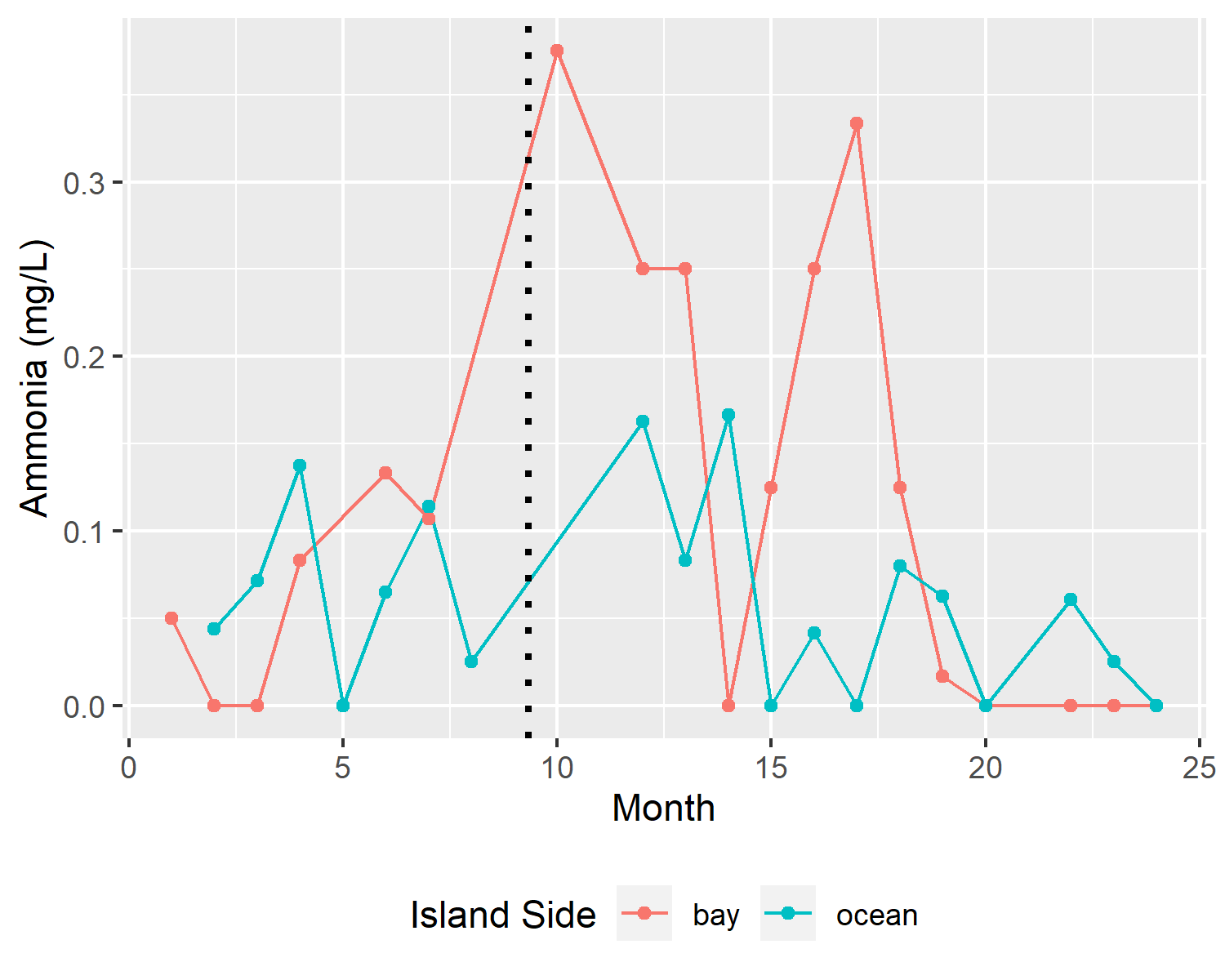


Figure 14: Influence of Hurricane Irma landfall on the mean ammonia levels (mg/L) of ocean and bayside waters in Key Largo, Florida. Hurricane Irma landfall occured on September 10, 2017 (indicated by dashed line).

Ammonia levels associated wit Hurricane Irma showed a dramatic spike in bayside site locations immediately following landfalland a small increase for oceanside sites. There is an additional drop and upspike in bayside ammonia associated with the spring-summer of 2018.

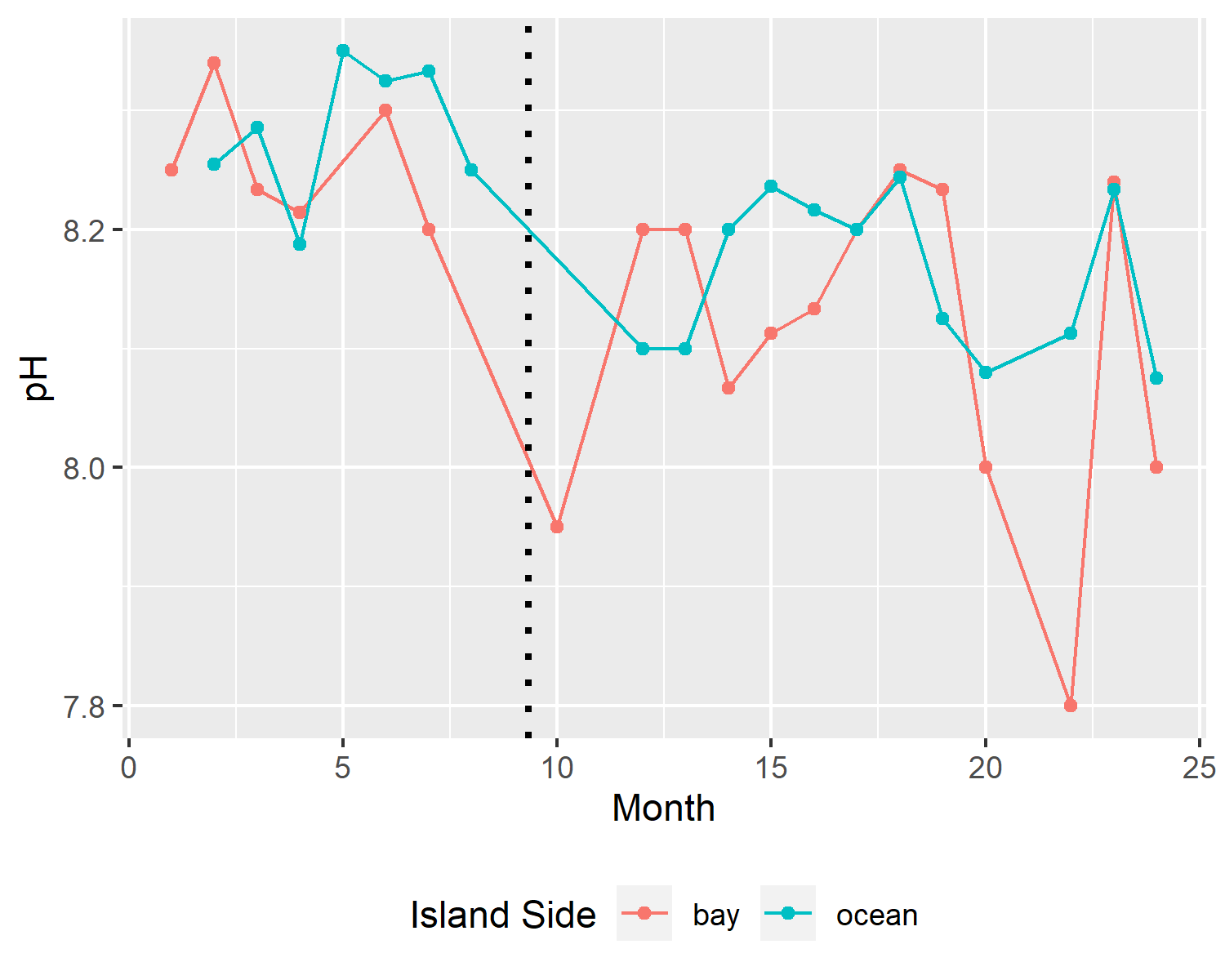


Figure 15: Influence of Hurricane Irma landfall on the mean pH levels of ocean and bayside waters in Key Largo, Florida. Hurricane Irma landfall occured on September 10, 2017 (indicated by dashed line).

pH levels associated with hurricane landfall showed a moderate drop for bayside site locations and little chnge for oceanside waters. The decrease in bayside pH is associated with and acute timeline of hurricane landfall, however the drop is not as substantial as some of the previously recorded fluctuations of pH from the seasonal analysis.

Water quality parameters of September-Febuary from Irma landfall were compared using a Two-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to water quality measures from the year prior to determine if any of the five parameters were statistically significant. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a p-value of 0.227 for water temperature, 0.002 for salinity, 0.499 for dissolved oxygen, 0.002 for ammonia, and 0.334 for pH. These results suggest that the salinity and ammonia levels were siginifcantly influenced by the landfall of Hurricane Irma. This significance is consistent with the visuals of univariate, bivariate, and Hurricane Irma analysis.

## Full analysis

### Question for Dr. Handel

Is the section below an apprpriate use of a tree-based model? I would like to detemrine if the data collected in this study (by citizen scientists) is accurate enough to correctly determine the major differences in the water quality of site locations. A detailed description is below:

Tree-based models were used to measure the efficacy of citizen science data collection through the classification of different location types. Tree models were developed to identify the major split points for the identification of island side (bayside or ocean) and site type (coral reef, seagrass/mangrove, or patch reef/hardbottom.) Citizen science efficacy was measured through the comparison of classification split points to the known water quality conditions that define the specific site type.

Citizen science efficacy analysis of island side (oceanside verses bayside) showed that the major predictor of island side was the salinity alone. A salinity measure of less than 34ppt represented the major division of the data. Sampling sites with a salinity less than 34ppt were typically associated with the bayside, where as greater than 34ppt sites were typically oceanside. This finding was consistent with previous analyses which showed substantial grouping of ocean and bayside site locations along saline lines. While informative, this characterization does not provide much information regarding the efficacy of the citizen science data collected since the most accurate model was based off of a single variable split. The results of this analysis can be viewed in Figure 16 below.

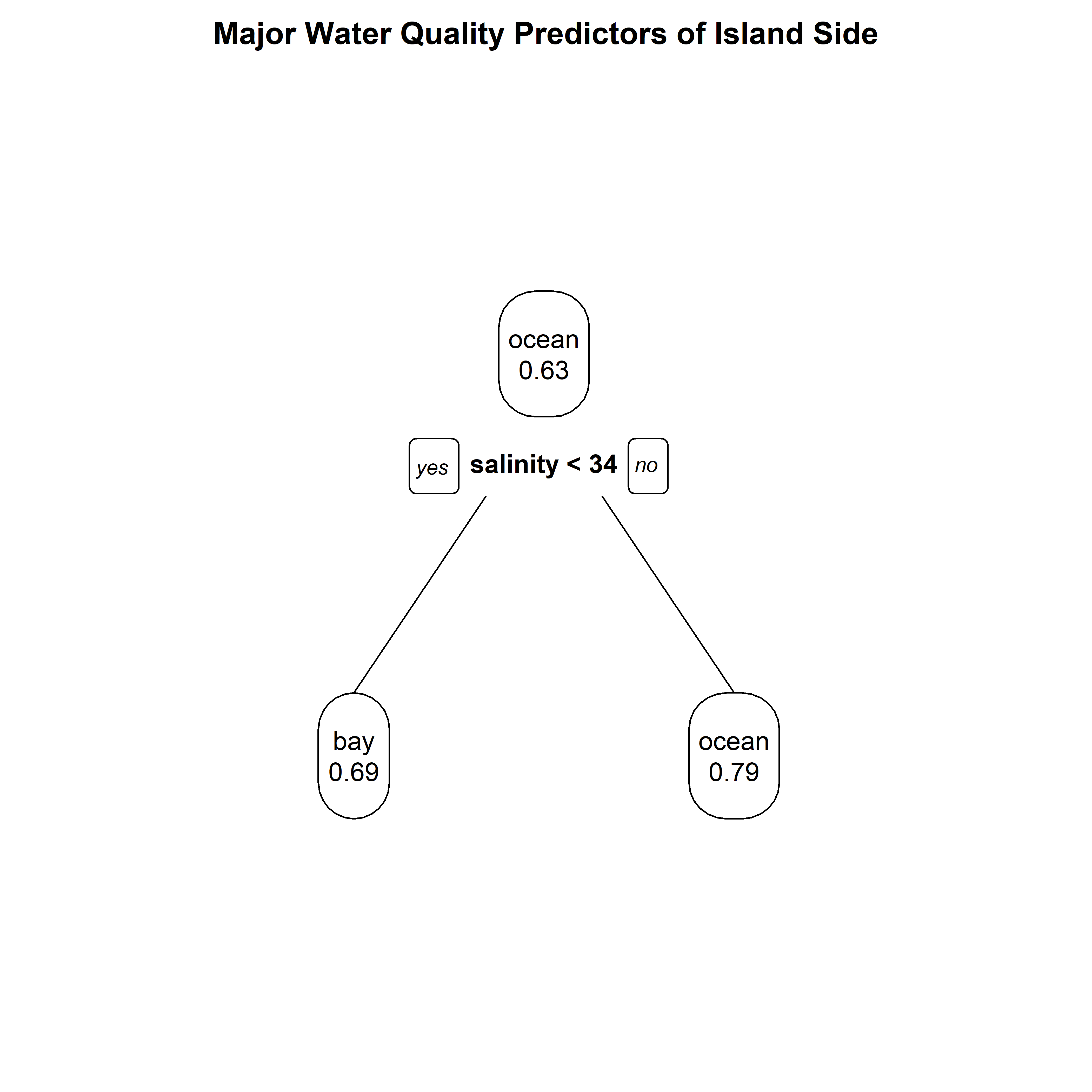


Figure 16: Major water quality predictors of island side as determined through the assessment of citizen science data. Island sides are defined as bayside (Florida Bay) and oceanside (Atlantic Ocean). The major predictor of island side is associated with a salinity level of 34 ppt.

Secondary efficacy analysis measured the characterization of three site types of interest: Coral Reefs, Seagrass/Mangrove, and Patch Reef/Hardbottom. The results of this analysis showed that site types were classified along three major lines. First, sites were split via salinity similar to the island side analysis. A salinity of 33ppt or lower was commonly associated with the Seagrass/Mangrove site type and represented a terminal node. Greater salinity was typically associated with Coral Reef sites, which was then split by water temperature. Water temperature above 30 (C) was typically associated with Patch Reef/Hardbottom sites and represented a terminal node. Cooler waters favored Coral Reefs, which then split again by pH levels. A pH greater than or equal to 8.2 represented Coral Reefs whereas below this value represented Seagrass/Mangrove sites which both ended as terminal nodes. The major split points of the site type tree model are consistent with the defining characteristics of water quality for each site. The results of this analysis can be viewed in figure 17 below.

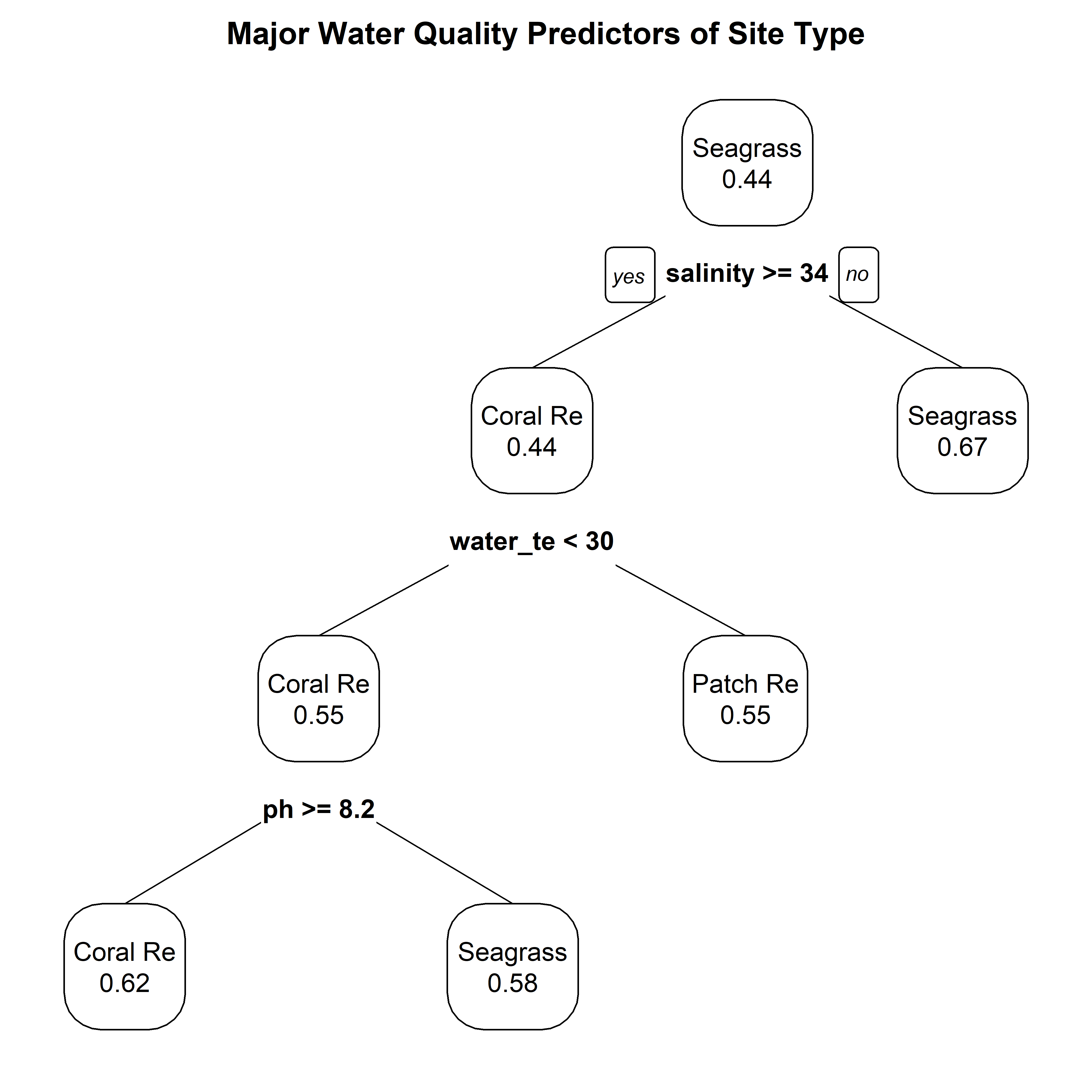


Figure 17: Figure 17 Major water quality predictors of site type as determined through the assessment of citizen science data. Site types are defined as Seagrass/Mangrove, Patch Reef/Hardbottom, and Coral Reef. Major predictor splits occur in association with a salinity level of 34 ppt, water temperature of 30 C, and a pH of 8.2.

## Results

## Discussion

## Summary and Interpretation

*Summarize what you did, what you found and what it means.*

## Strengths and Limitations

*Discuss what you perceive as strengths and limitations of your analysis.*

## Conclusions

*What are the main take-home messages?*

*Include citations in your Rmd file using bibtex, the list of references will automatically be placed at the end*

# References

Bertollo, P. (2008). Assessing ecosystem health in governed landscapes: A framework for developing core indicators. *Ecosystem Health*, *4*(1), 33–51.

Bliss, A., J. (2001). Community-based ecosystem monitoring. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*, *12*(3–4), 143–167.

Precht, W. F., & Miller, S. L. (2007). Ecological shifts along the Florida reef tract; the past as a key to the future. *Ecological Studies*, *347*, 237–312.