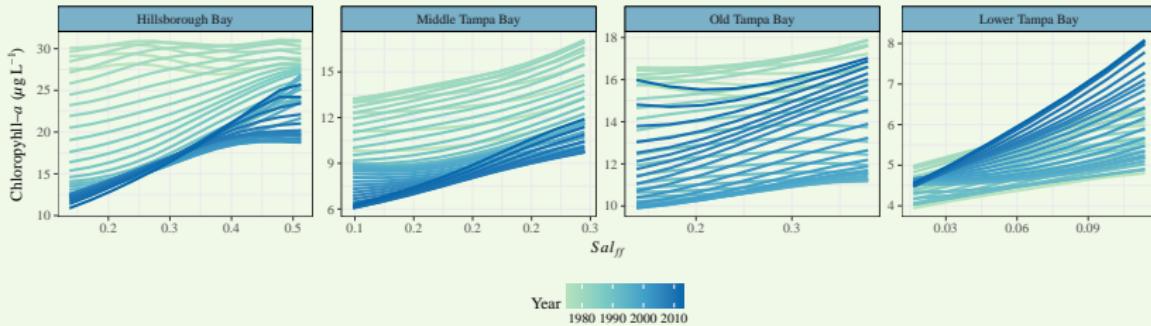


# Quantitative approaches to evaluate surface water quality: Examples from Minnesota Lakes to Florida Estuaries

Marcus W. Beck

ORISE post-doc, USEPA National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Gulf Ecology Division, beck.marcus@epa.gov, Phone: 8509342480

Sep. 22, 2015



# Assessing environmental condition

How do we collect and use data?

The foundation of environmental management is a strong monitoring network [National Research Council, 1990]

Monitoring provides information for decision-making based on apparent trends...

*What are the changes in environmental condition over time?*

*Are these changes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ based on our management objectives?*

*What may have caused these changes?*

# Assessing environmental condition

## How do we collect and use data?

***The good news:*** We are getting better at monitoring - standardized, automated, increased coverage, real-time/continuous

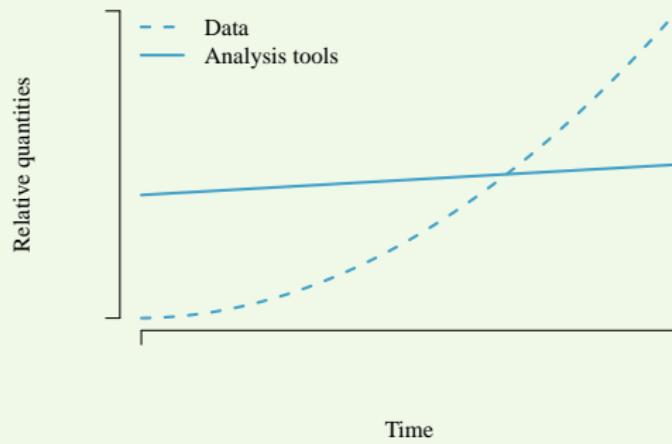
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## How do we collect and use data?

Most of my research career has focused on using monitoring data to understand effects of eutrophication in one form or another

*Eutrophication (noun) - an **increase** in the rate of supply of organic matter to an ecosystem*

– [Nixon, 1995]

Adapted from [Cloern, 2001]

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### Nutrient Loading

Adapted from [Cloern, 2001]

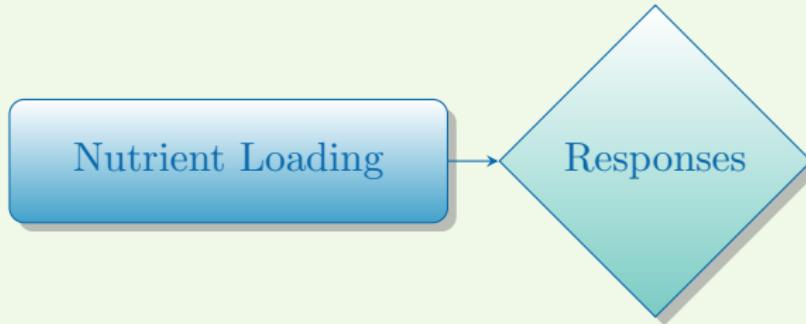
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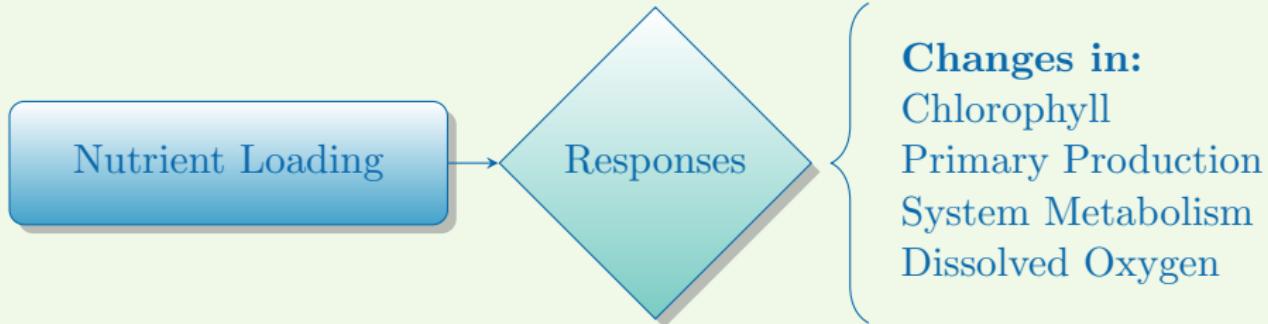
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Today's talk: My experience synthesizing and evaluating monitoring data to inform our understanding of the eutrophication paradigm

- ***Case 1:*** Understanding response of a biotic index for Minnesota lakes
- ***Case 2:*** Evaluating long-term datasets of chlorophyll in Tampa Bay
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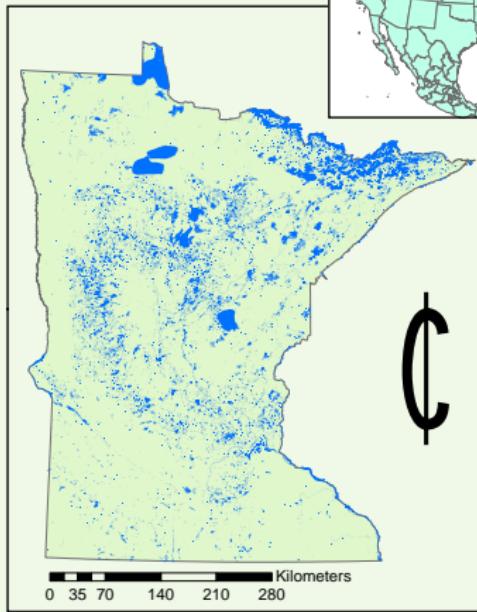
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Each case addresses the challenges of *understanding nutrient dynamics* and *developing quantitative tools* for assessment

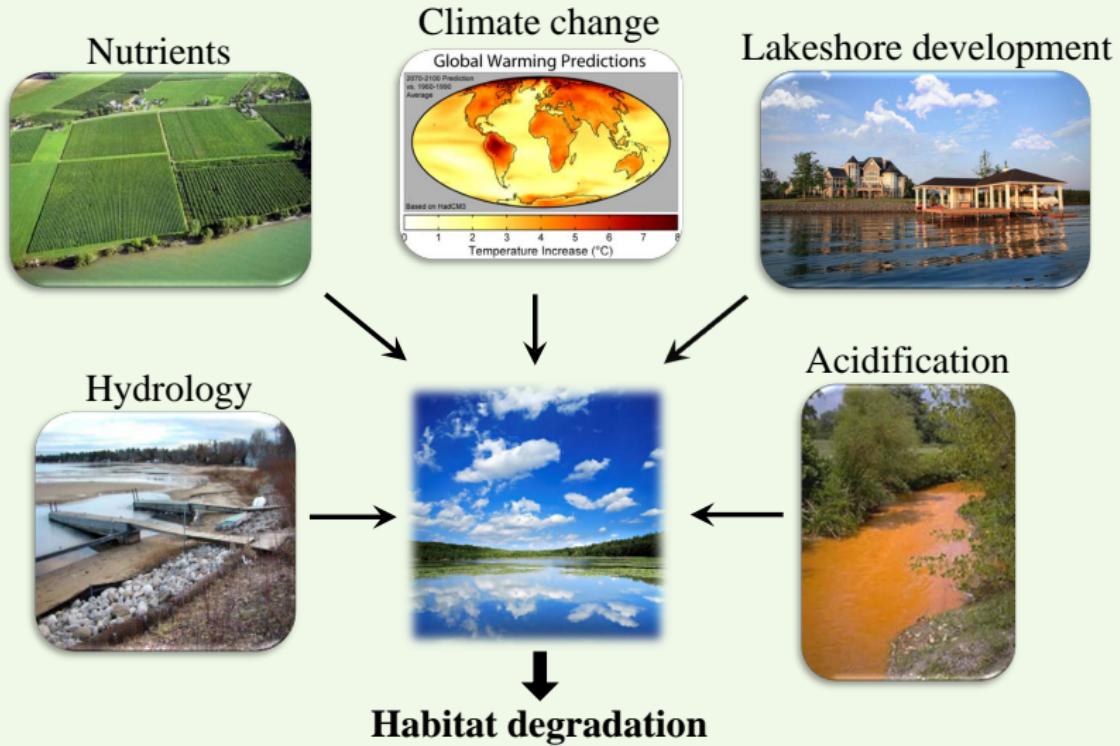
# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response



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### Water Quality Act Amendments of 1972

- Federal mandates to protect and restore the chemical, physical, and *biological* integrity of surface waters
- Protection and restoration requires monitoring

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

### Water Quality Act Amendments of 1972

- Federal mandates to protect and restore the chemical, physical, and *biological* integrity of surface waters
- Protection and restoration requires monitoring

### Index of biotic integrity (IBI) [Karr, 1981, Karr et al., 1986]

- Monitoring framework for definition and evaluation of biotic integrity
- Uses aquatic organisms as indicators of ecosystem health
- A multimetric index that is regionally specific

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

The macrophyte IBI can be used to evaluate relative lake condition by monitoring and evaluating aquatic plant metrics [Beck et al., 2010]

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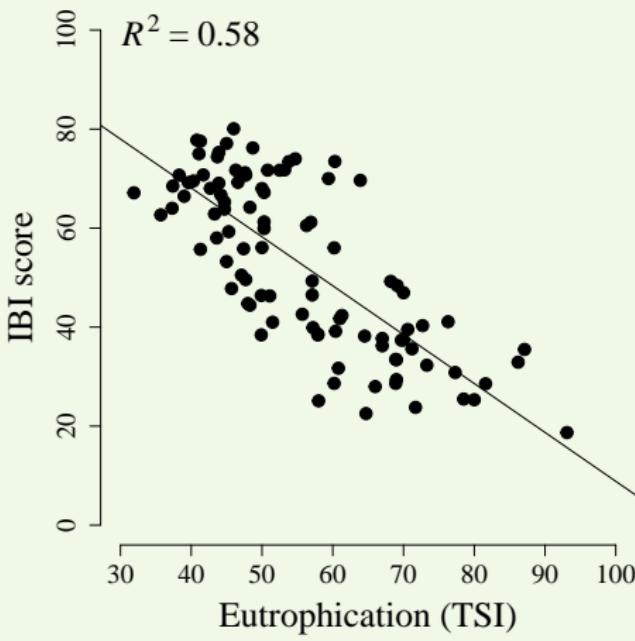
Composed of eight metrics, summed to get one IBI score per lake

- MAXD: Maximum depth of plant growth
- LITT: Percentage of littoral zone vegetated
- OVER: Number of species with frequency occurrence >10%
- EMFL: Relative frequency of emergent-floating species
- SUBM: Relative frequency of submersed species
- SENS: Relative frequency of sensitive species
- TOLR: Relative frequency of tolerant species
- TAXA: Number of native taxa

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

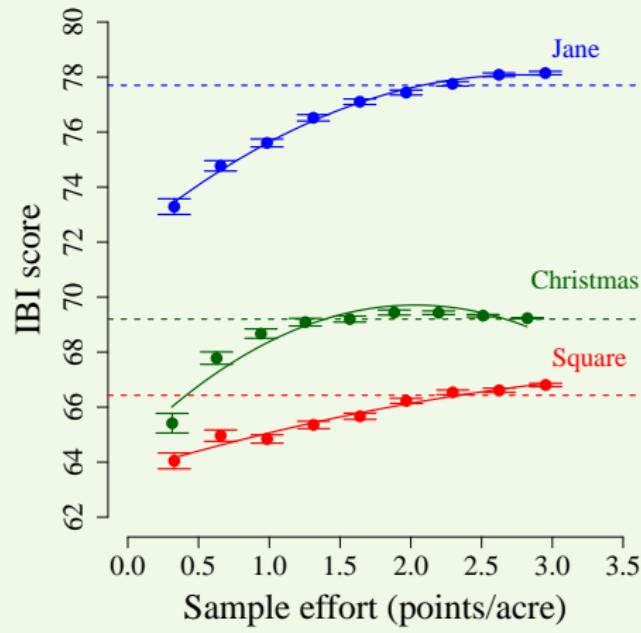
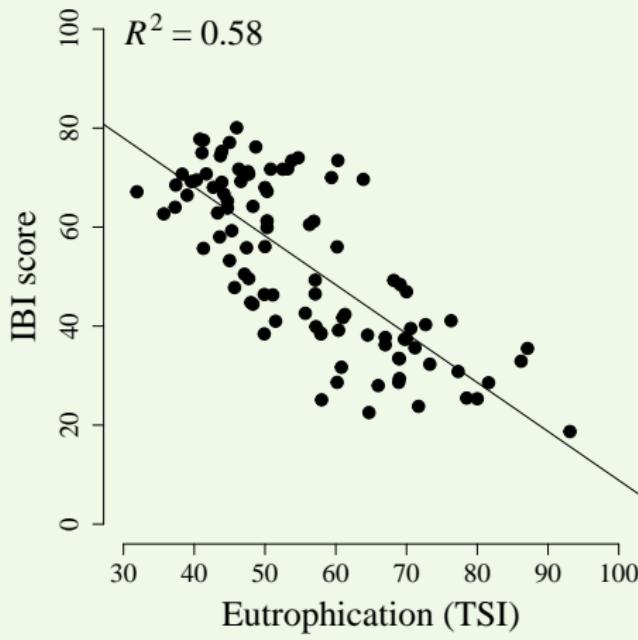
Related to changes in water quality



# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

Related to changes in water quality High precision given sampling effort



# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

How appropriate is the IBI for characterizing effects of multiple stressors? Will it work within an assessment/impairment framework?

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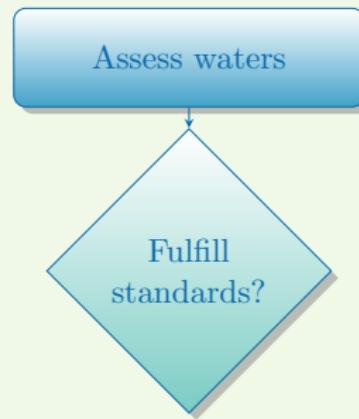
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Assess waters

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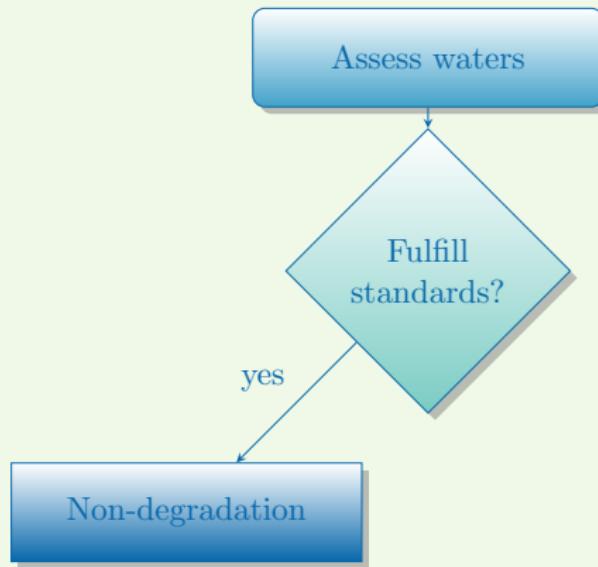
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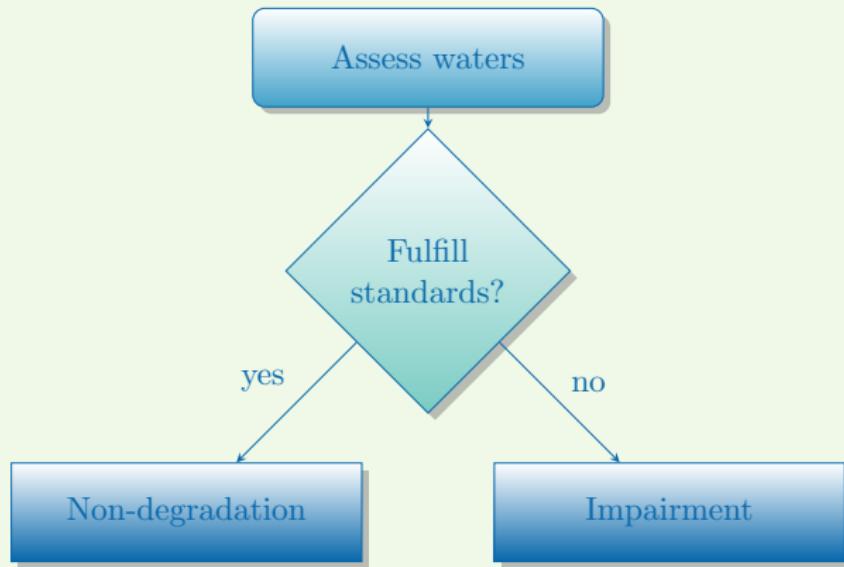
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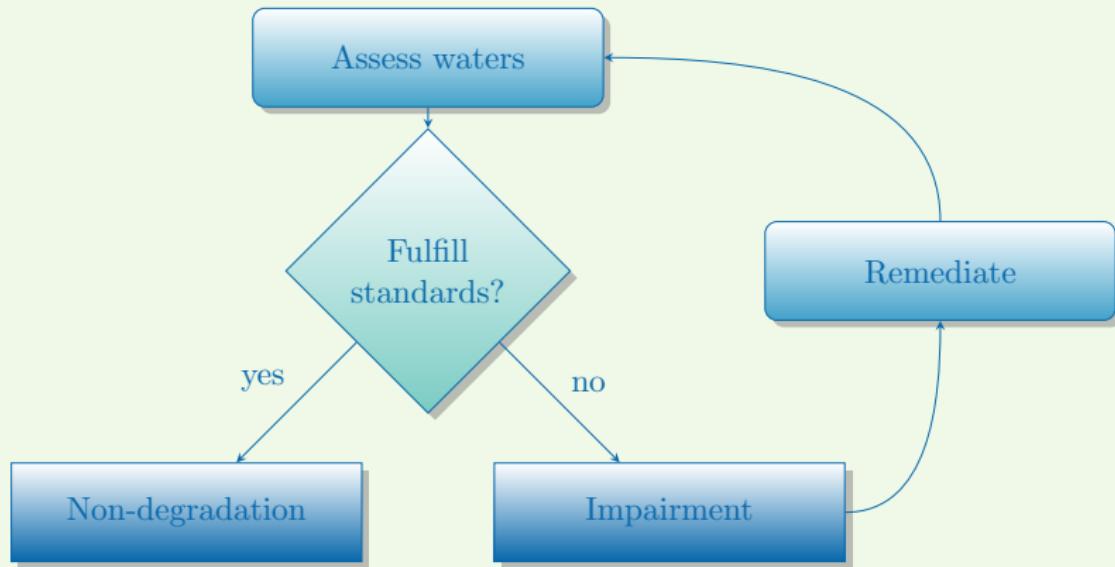
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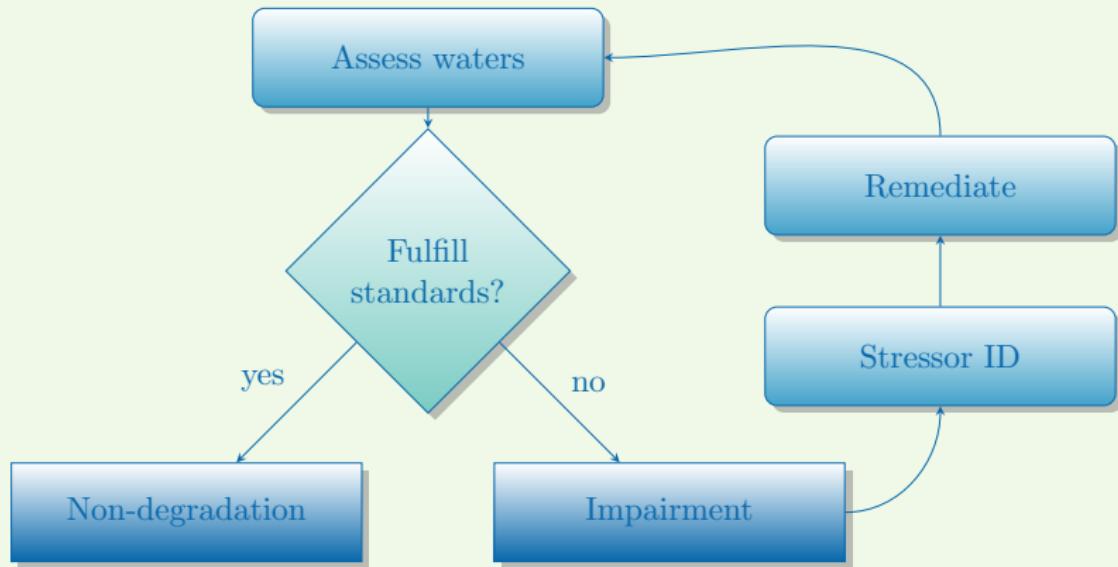
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# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

Consider an IBI with 12 metrics, each scored 1, 3, or 5

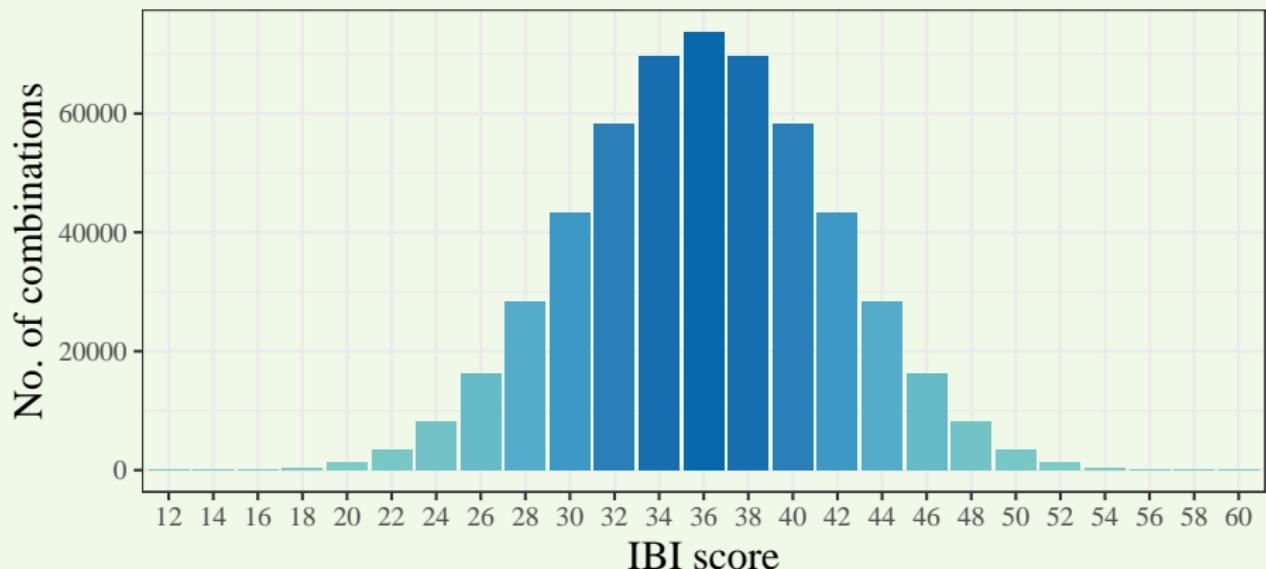
How many different combinations of metrics lead to the same score?

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*Develop and implement a framework for evaluating the macrophyte IBI to inform its use in biological monitoring:*

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

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*Develop and implement a framework for evaluating the macrophyte IBI to inform its use in biological monitoring:*

1. How well does the index distinguish between signal and noise?
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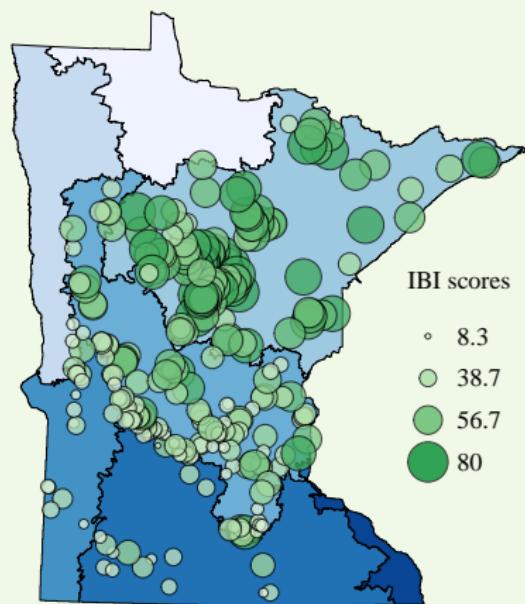
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1. How well does the index distinguish between signal and noise?
2. Can information on stressors and their effects be quantified with certainty?
3. What stressors primarily influence index response?
4. How appropriate is a multimetric index for characterizing effects of multiple stressors?

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

- Dataset of 332 vegetation surveys, courtesy of MNDNR
- Numerous covariates describing lake characteristics and anthropogenic stressors



- lake surface area
- maximum lake depth
- trophic state index
- growing degree days
- percent agriculture in wshed
- percent impervious surfaces in wshed
- density of groundwater wells in wshed
- wshed area to lake area
- crop productivity index of wshed
- dock density
- ...

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

Ecological and numerical complexity warrants the use of creative solutions

Neural networks to model IBI response

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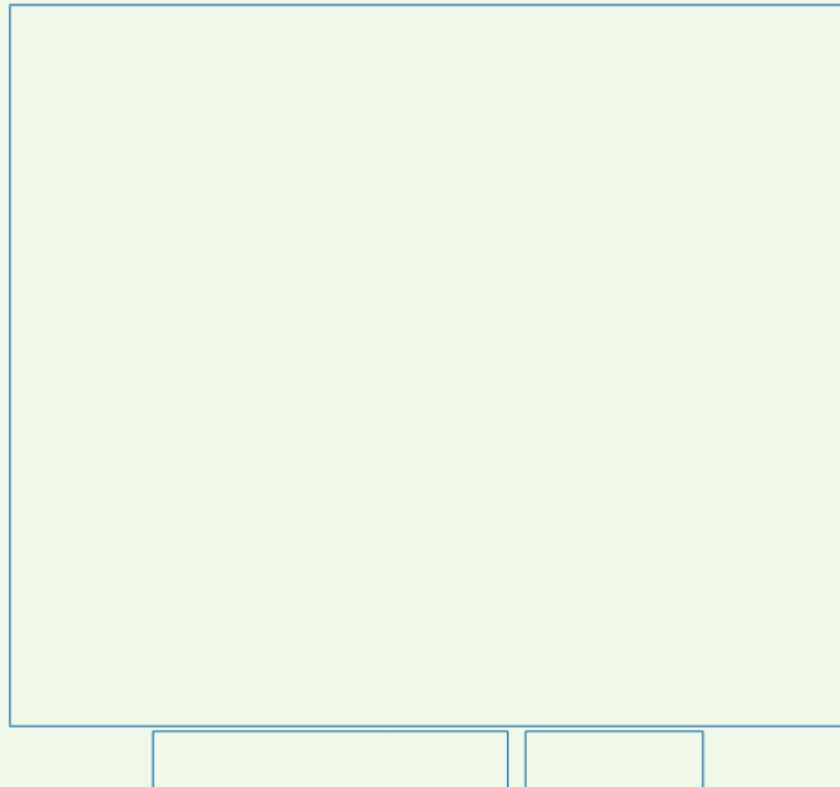
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Neural networks to model IBI response

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- ‘Supervised’ neural networks are meant for prediction but network information can be used to infer causation

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response



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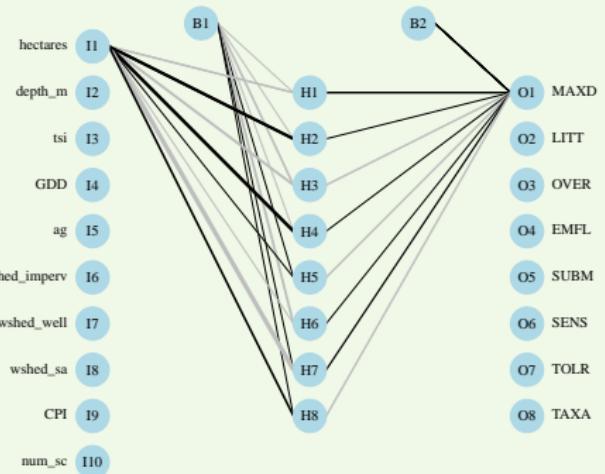
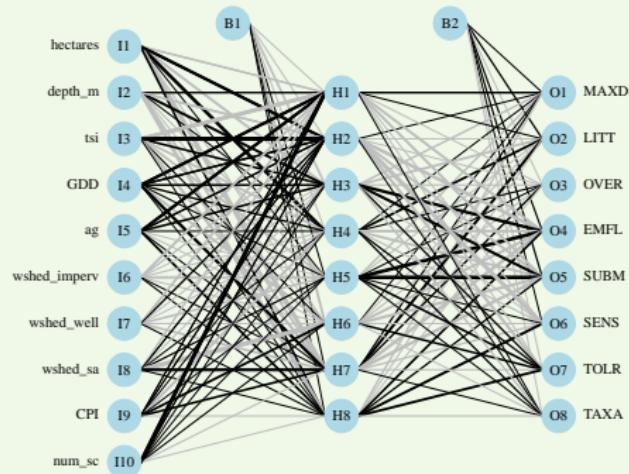
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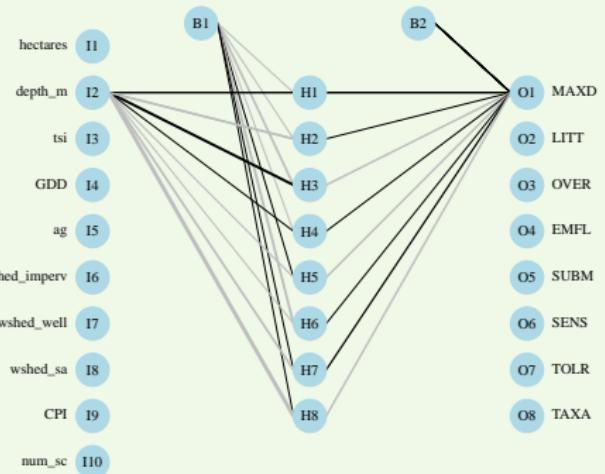
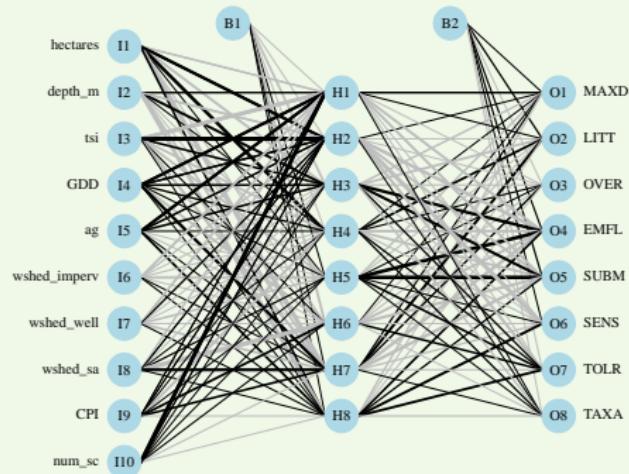
Modification of Garson's algorithm to determine relative importance of variables [Garson, 1991]



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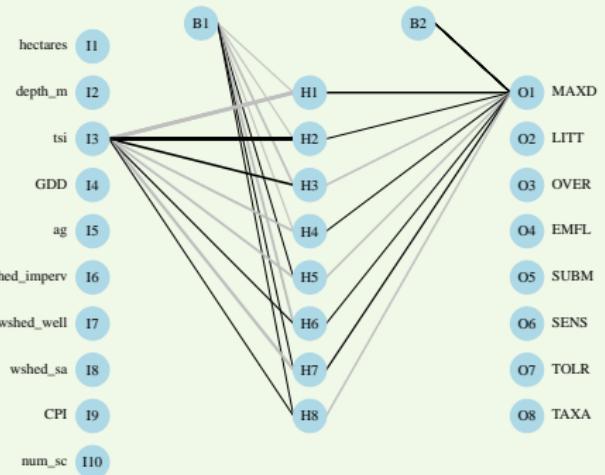
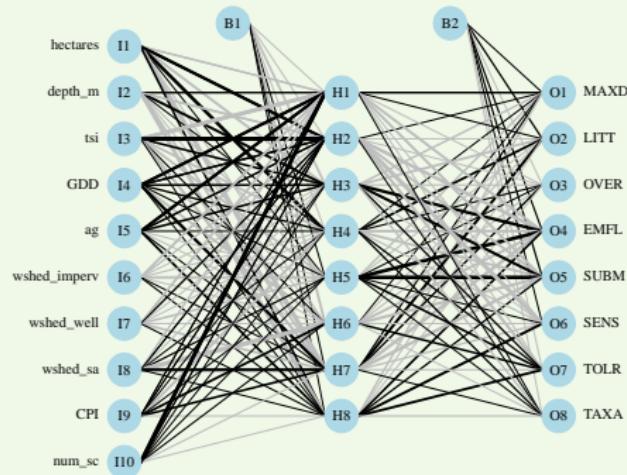
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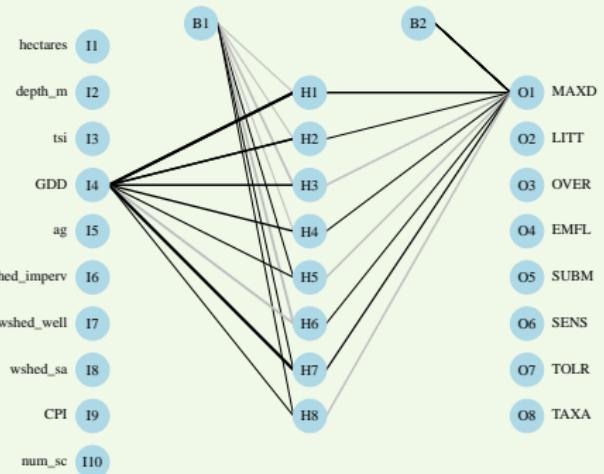
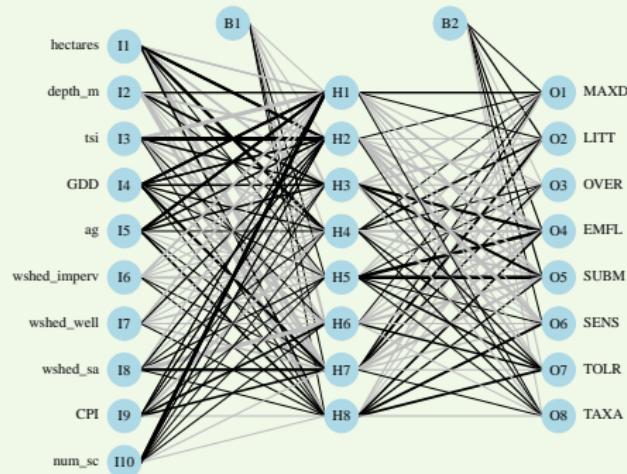
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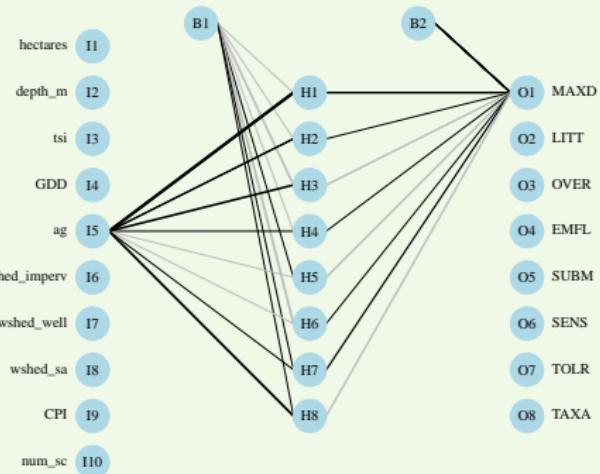
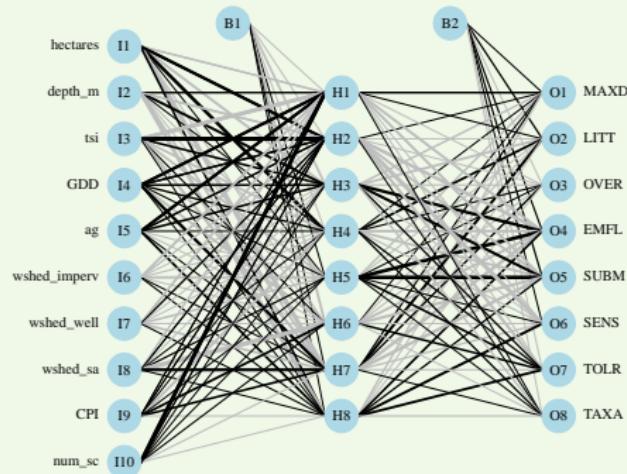
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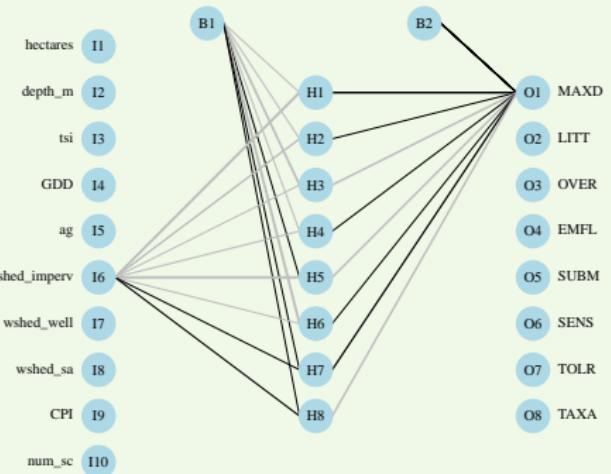
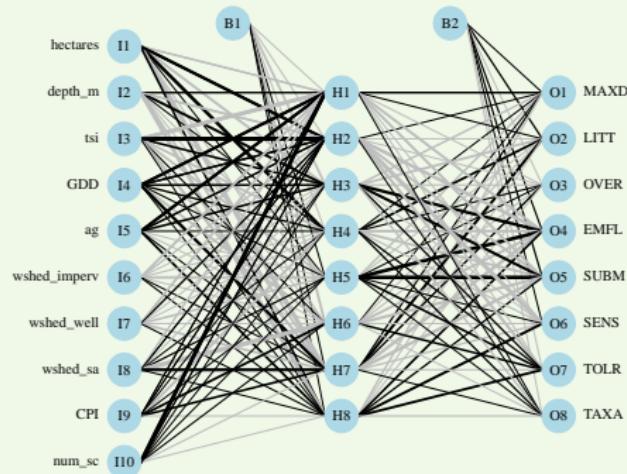
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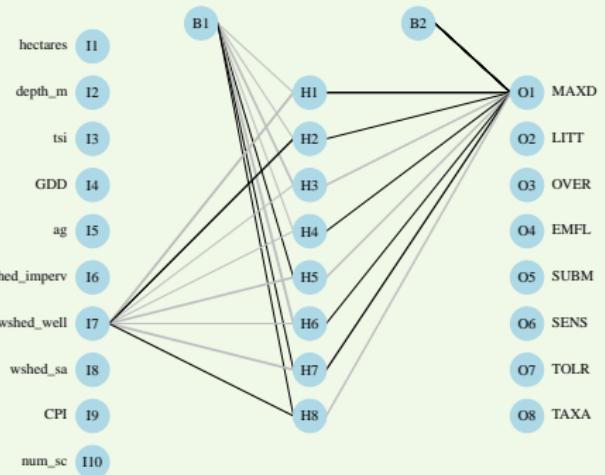
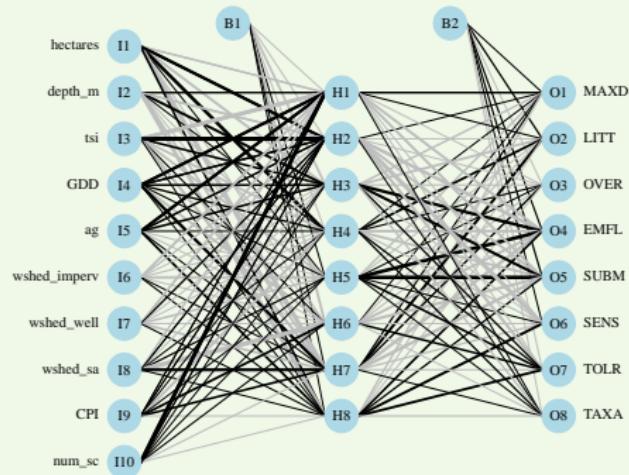
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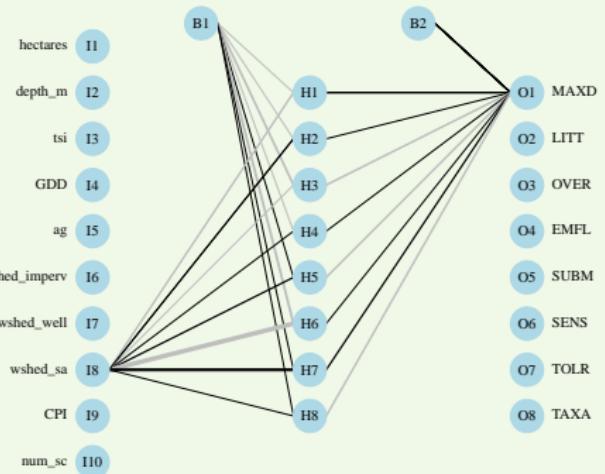
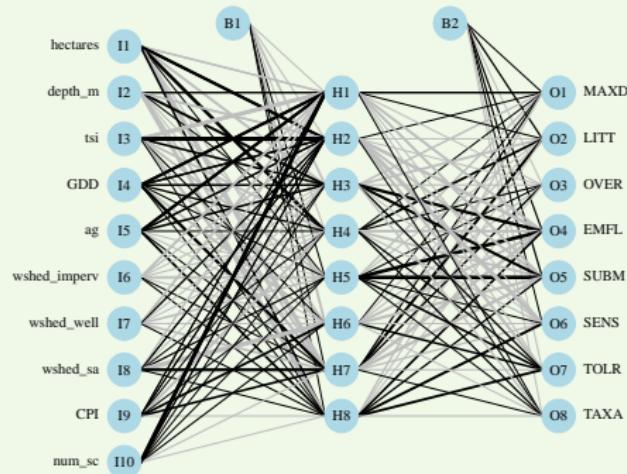
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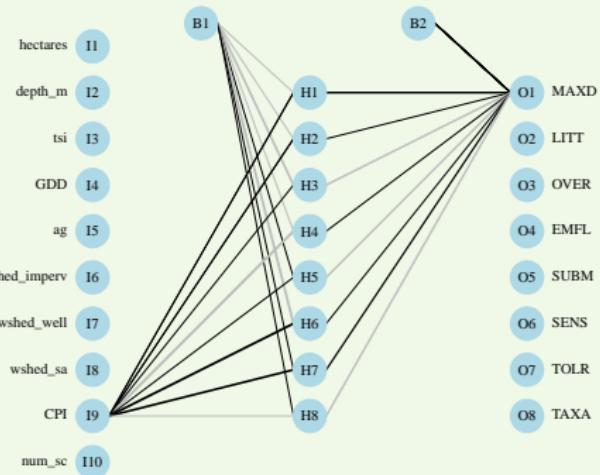
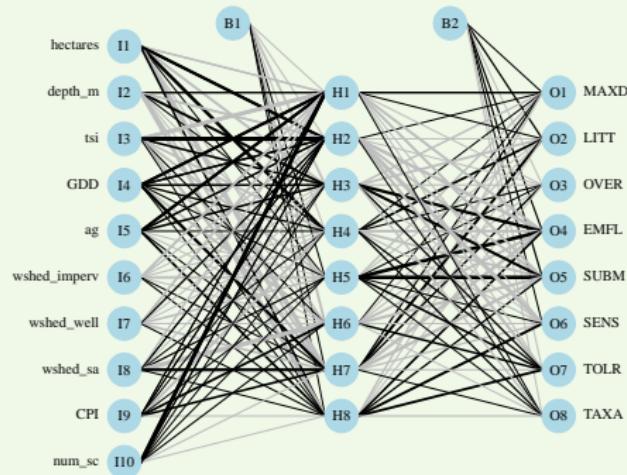
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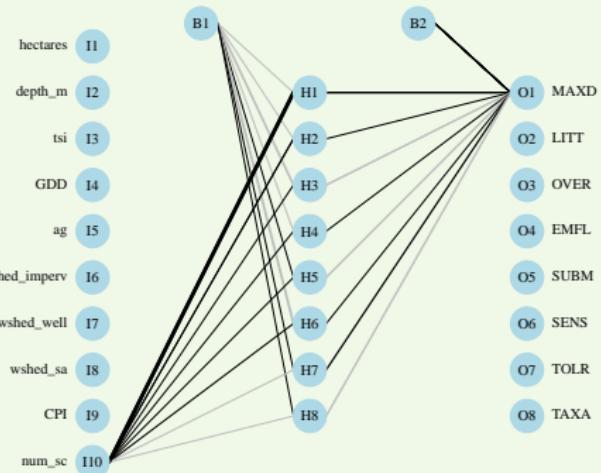
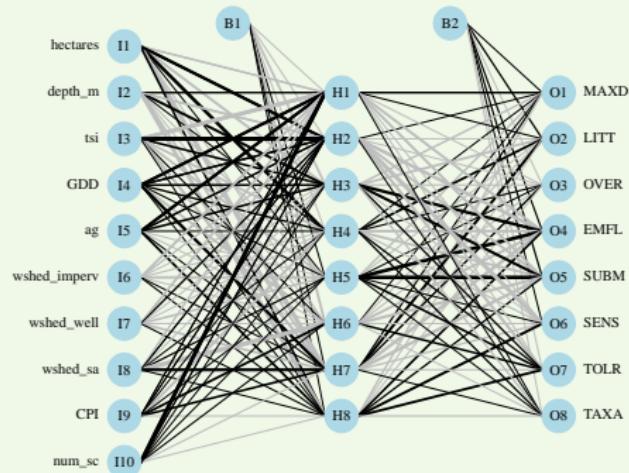
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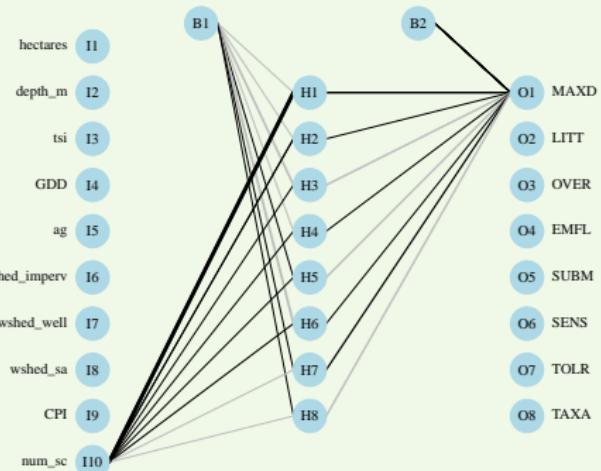
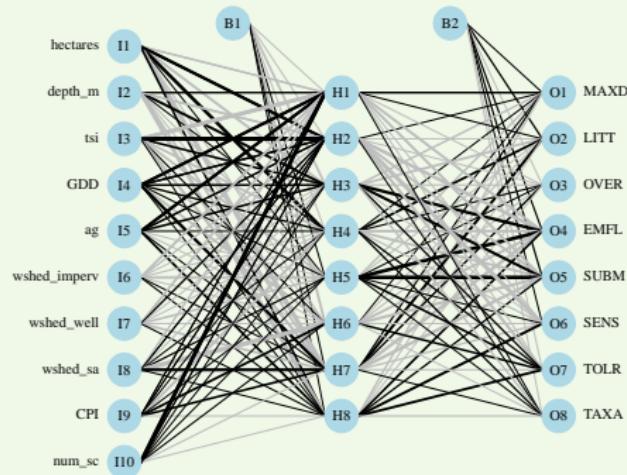
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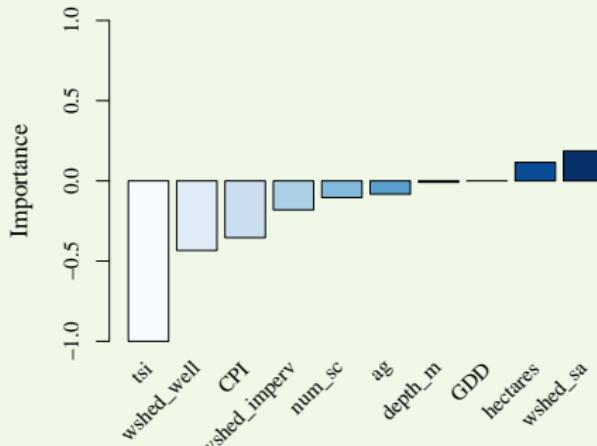
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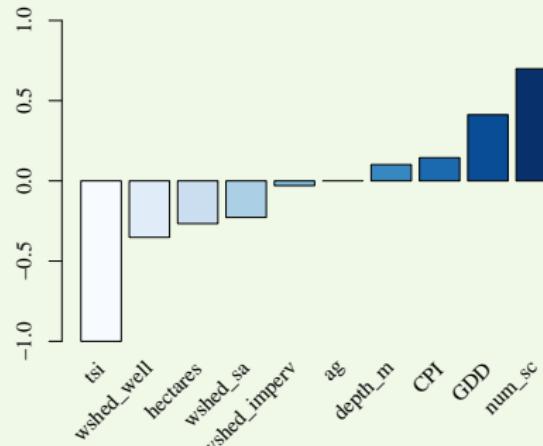
Relative importance is summation of product of weights between layers

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response



(a) IBI scores



(b) MAXD metric

Figure : Examples of relative importance of explanatory variables based on weights between layers in optimal neural networks.

## Case 1: Minnesota lakes

### Evaluating biological response

Neural networks are powerful enough to model noise in the data

The model may be specific to peculiarities the training dataset

Uncertainty of variable importance must be quantified - bootstrap!

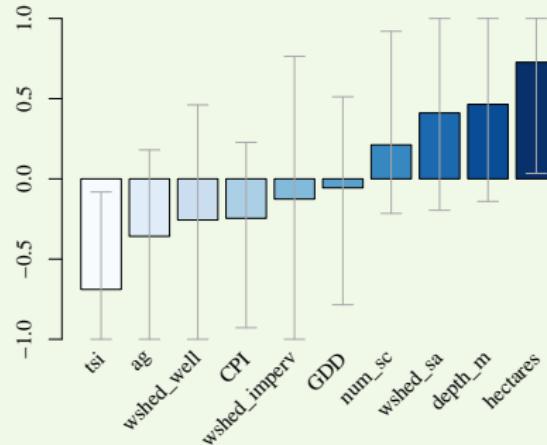
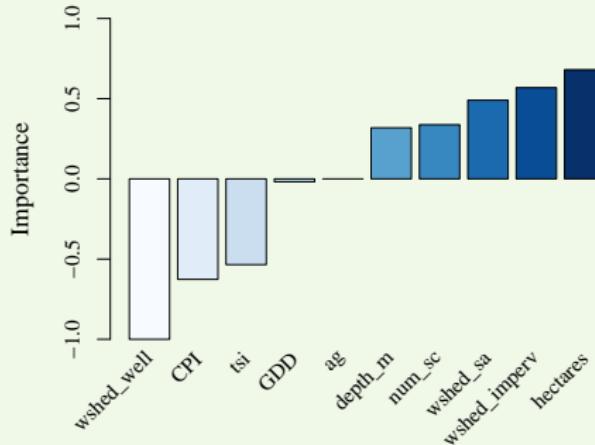
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Lots of uncertainty associated with input contributions...

- One of ten relationships for IBI scores with explanatory variables
- Four of 80 relationships for metrics with explanatory variables

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What is the source of this uncertainty? Sample sizes, method, neural network?

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

## Evaluating biological response

Potentially competing objectives of an IBI: certainty vs simplicity

# Case 1: Minnesota lakes

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Potentially competing objectives of an IBI: certainty vs simplicity

*IBI relies on multiparameters, a requirement when the system to be evaluated is complex. [Karr et al., 1986]*

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*Combining responses into an index hides the component responses, thereby obscuring causation. [Suter, 1993]*

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

USEPA Gulf Ecology Division - guidance to Florida DEP and others on criteria development for estuaries

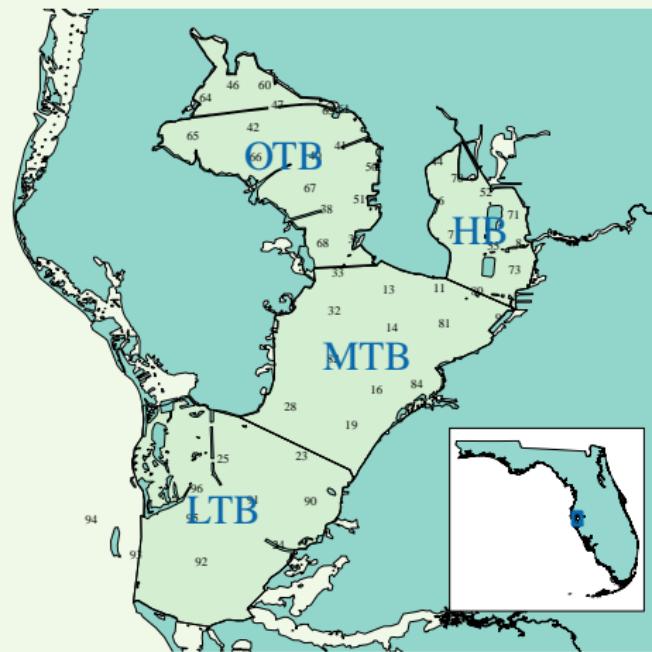


## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

- Four bay segments
- Monthly wq data at 50 stations from 1974 to present
- Longitudinal profile of nutrient load and salinity

Data from [TBEP (Tampa Bay Estuary Program), 2011]



## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

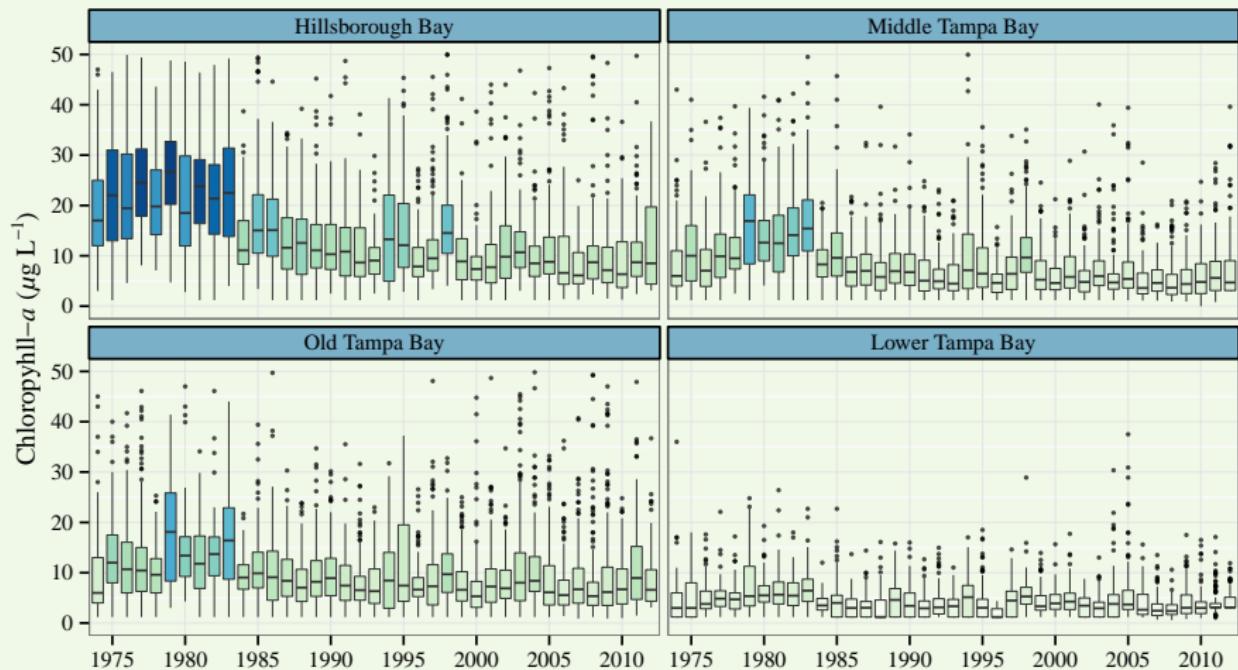


Figure : Annual trends in chlorophyll for each bay segment.

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

What affects our interpretation of chlorophyll response to nutrients?

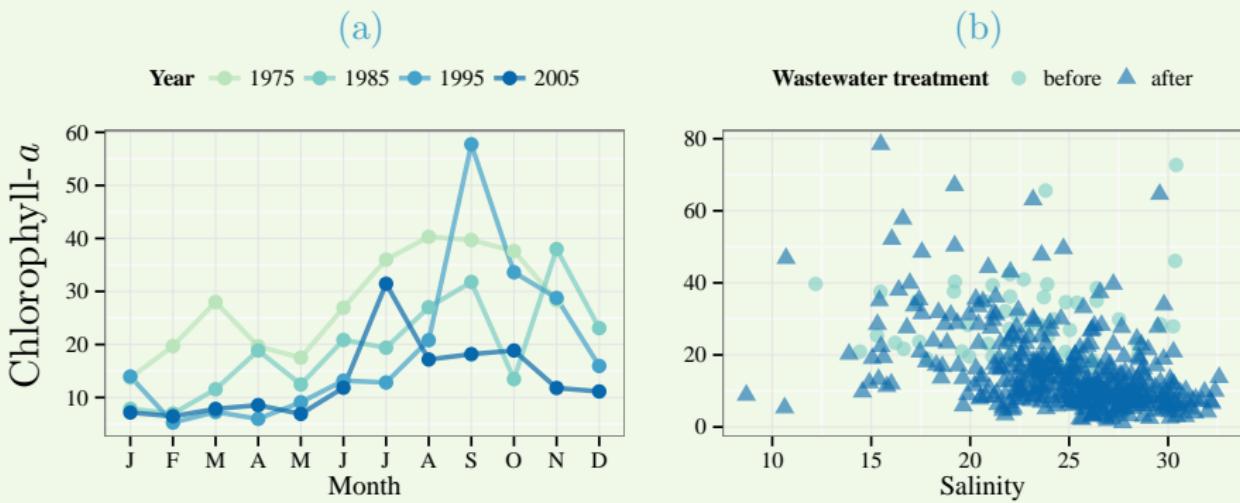


Figure : Variation in chlorophyll by (a) time and (b) salinity and management in Hillsborough Bay. Panel (a) is colored before and after wastewater treatment in 1979.

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

#### Study objective

Adapt and apply nutrient response model for estuaries that leverages the descriptive capabilities of large datasets [Beck and Hagy III, 2015]

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- ...provide a natural history of water quality that is temporally consistent with drivers of change?
- ...characterize changes in extreme events in addition to describing the mean response?
- ...improve our understanding of the nutrient-response paradigm in estuaries?

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

The *weighted regression (WRTDS)* model is being developed by USGS for pollutant modelling in rivers [Hirsch et al., 2010]

Based on the idea that pollution concentration is a function of *time*, *discharge*, and *season*

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

The ***weighted regression (WRTDS)*** model is being developed by USGS for pollutant modelling in rivers [Hirsch et al., 2010]

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***Adaptation:*** Can this approach be used to evaluate chlorophyll trends in Tampa Bay?

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

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How does weighted regression work?

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

This gives us improved predictions of chlorophyll dynamics...

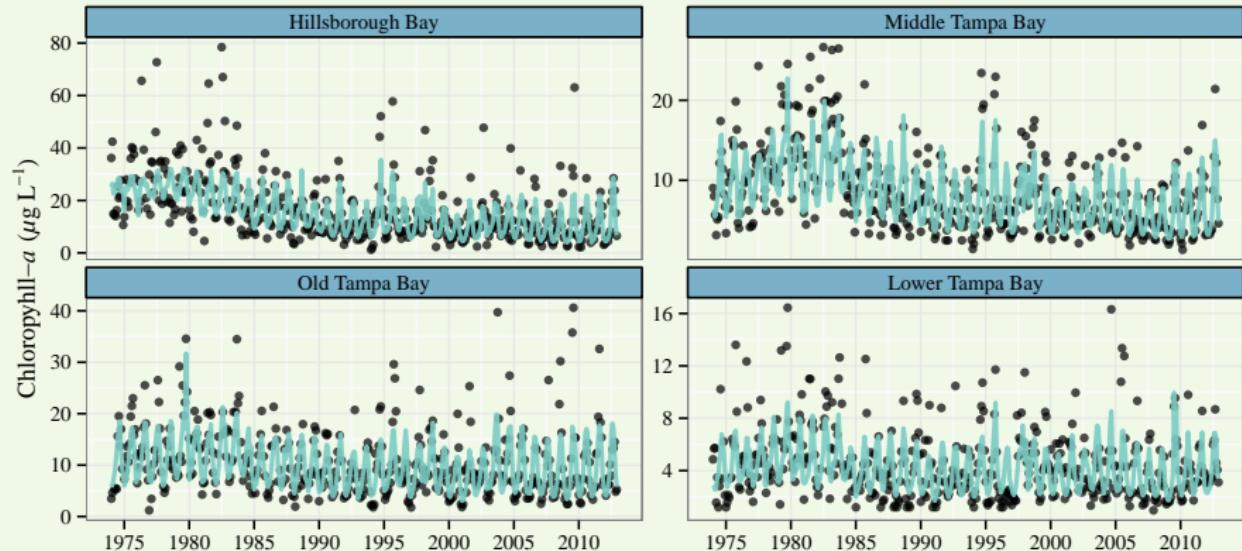
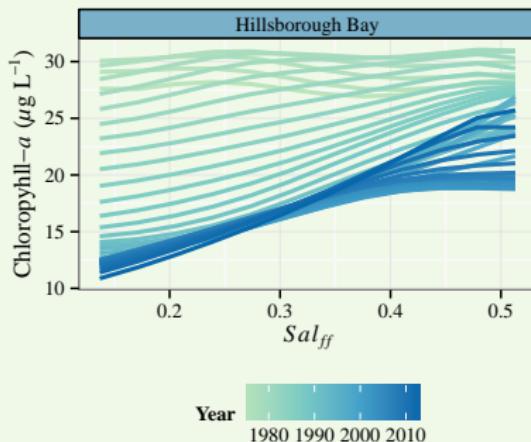


Figure : Predicted and observed monthly chlorophyll by segment.

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

Because the model is dynamic, we have parameters describing the relationship of chlorophyll with other factors specific to different time periods



- Early period (light blue) - point-sources
- Late period (dark blue) - non-point sources
- Chlorophyll shows increasing response to freshwater input in recent years

## Case 2: Florida estuaries

### Evaluating long-term chlorophyll datasets

What does this mean for Tampa Bay and elsewhere?

- Predictions followed observed chlorophyll – but increased clarity in the description
- More detailed evaluation of trends allows greater insight into drivers of change

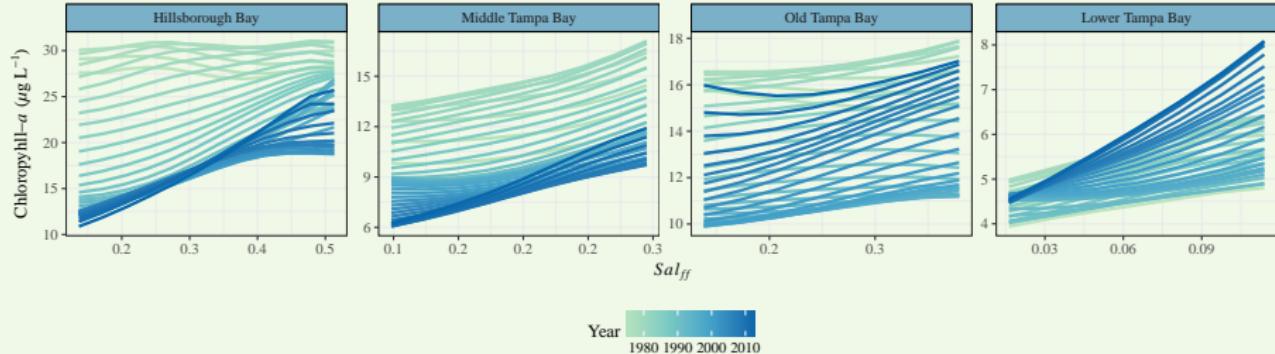
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The model parameters show us a picture...



## Case 3: Open-source science

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Progress in science is incremental and builds on past work

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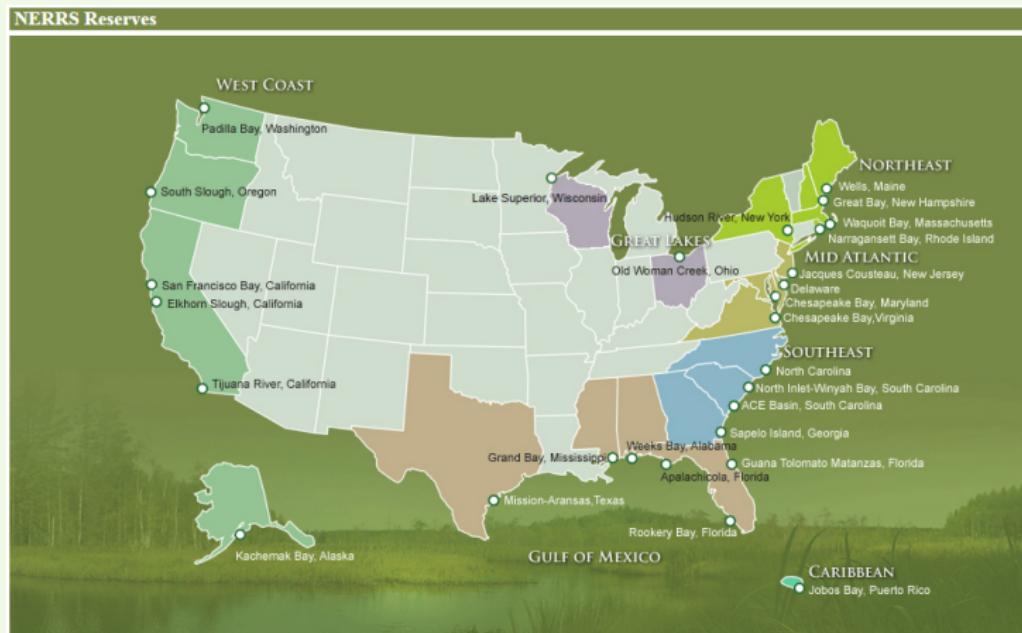
...digital tools have proliferated to *facilitate sharing*



# Case 3: Open-source science

## Analysis tools for water quality data

### The NERRS System-Wide Monitoring Program...



## Case 3: Open-source science

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The SWMP database and others like it represent incredible opportunities to further our knowledge of natural systems...

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**Solution:** Develop open-source tools that address the challenges of large-scale comparative analyses with continuous monitoring data

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### Analysis tools for water quality data

The SWMP database and others like it represent incredible opportunities to further our knowledge of natural systems...

...including the effects of eutrophication

**Problem:** These data are numerous and not easily compared

**Solution:** Develop open-source tools that address the challenges of large-scale comparative analyses with continuous monitoring data

The benefits include:

- Free for use by anyone
- Free to collaborate
- Facilitation of analysis with ‘under-the-hood’ functionality

# Case 3: Open-source science

## Analysis tools for water quality data

Each reserve has fixed, continuous monitoring stations for **water quality** (15 min), **meteorology** (15 min), and **nutrients** (monthly)

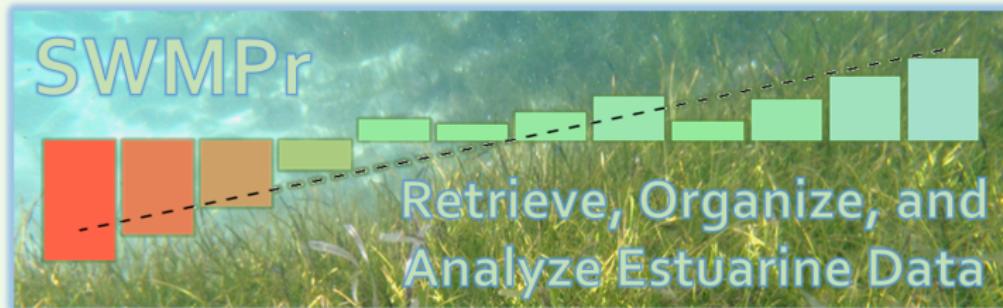
As of this month, > 60 million records available online

Raw data look like this:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	StationCo	isSWMP	DateTimeStamp	Historical	Provision	CollMeth	REP	F_Record	PO4F	F_PO4F	NH4F	F_NH4F
2	apacpnut	P	1/10/2012 10:20	0	1	1	1	0.003 <-> [SBL]	0.03 <0>			
3	apacpnut	P	2/7/2012 11:41	0	1	1	1	0.005 <0>		0.019 <0>		
4	apacpnut	P	3/5/2012 11:51	0	1	1	1	0.003 <-> [SBL]	0.041 <0>			
5	apacpnut	P	4/4/2012 10:30	0	1	1	1	0.003 <-> [SBL]	0.043 <0>			
6	apacpnut	P	5/9/2012 10:12	0	1	1	1	0.003 <0>		0.053 <0>		
7	apacpnut	P	5/9/2012 10:15	0	1	1	2	0.003 <-> [SBL]	0.022 <0>			
8	apacpnut	P	5/9/2012 10:20	0	1	1	3	0.003 <0>		0.016 <0>		
9	apacpnut	P	6/5/2012 8:30	0	1	1	1	0.003 <-> [SBL]	0.04 <0>			
10	apacpnut	P	7/3/2012 9:58	0	1	1	1 {CSM}	0.004 <0>		0.094 <0>		
11	apacpnut	P	7/3/2012 9:59	0	1	1	2 {CSM}	0.004 <0>		0.066 <0>		

## Case 3: Open-source science

Analysis tools for water quality data



***SWMPPr*** is a freely available package for use with R

- ***Retrieve*** SWMP data for any site and date combination
- ***Organize*** the data using standard pre-processing techniques
- ***Analyze*** the data using a suite of exploratory and graphical analysis tools

# Case 3: Open-source science

## Analysis tools for water quality data

SWMPrats.net: *System-Wide Monitoring Program Resources for the Analysis of Time Series*

**SWMPrats.net**

**SWMPrats.net**

The SWMPrats.net web pages serve as a time series and data analysis information and tool resource for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP).

**Trends in SWMP parameters**

Created by Marcus W. Beck, beck.marcus@epa.gov, Todd O'Brien, todd.o'brien@noaa.gov

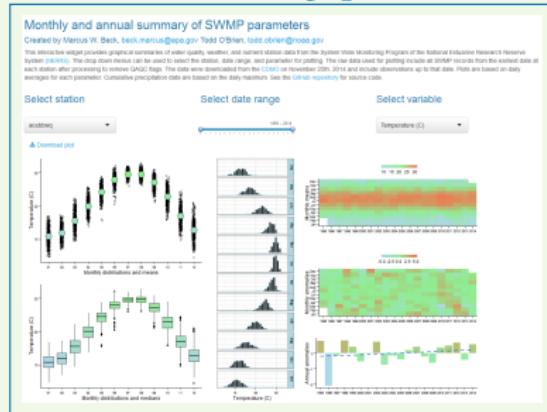
This widget is an interactive tool to evaluate trends in SWMP data. Trends are described by an increase or decrease in values over time using a simple linear regression of summarized data. The significance of the trend is indicated by the radius of the circles and the shading where larger points with darker colors indicate a strong trend. Original data are available from <http://icelink.bianchi.sc.edu>. The map is centered at 34.44° -95.86° with a zoom level of 5.

# Case 3: Open-source science

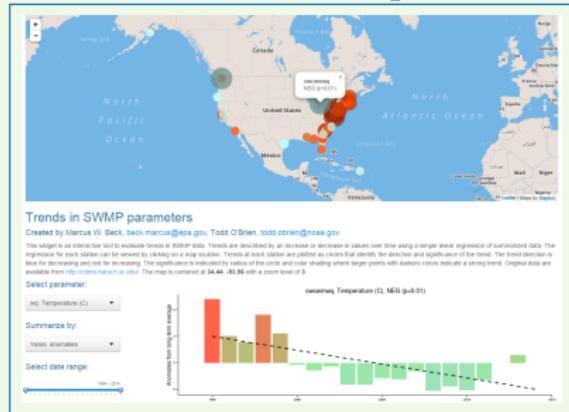
## Analysis tools for water quality data

Two online applications can help visualize trends

## *Summary plots*



## *Trends map*



## Case 3: Open-source science

### Analysis tools for water quality data

Tools in the SWMPr package have facilitated comparative analyses of millions of water quality records from NERRS

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### Analysis tools for water quality data

Tools in the SWMPr package have facilitated comparative analyses of millions of water quality records from NERRS

These tools can help improve our understanding of nutrient pollution and eutrophication

Potential for many other applications... actively being developed



# Conclusions

Our ability to *share*, *reproduce*, and *collaborate* is essential

***SWMPPr package:*** <https://github.com/fawda123/SWMPPr>

***Summaries of SWMP parameters:***

[https://beckmw.shinyapps.io/swmp\\_summary](https://beckmw.shinyapps.io/swmp_summary)

***Trends in SWMP parameters:***

[https://beckmw.shinyapps.io/swmp\\_comp](https://beckmw.shinyapps.io/swmp_comp)

***This presentation:*** [https://github.com/fawda123/ncea\\_pres](https://github.com/fawda123/ncea_pres)

***Github:*** [github.com/fawda123/](https://github.com/fawda123/)

***Blog:*** [beckmw.wordpress.com/](https://beckmw.wordpress.com/)

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