Drivers of microbial community structure in a shallow estuary in the southeast that experiences seasonal hypoxia.

Weeks Bay is a shallow, tidally influenced estuary on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay in Alabama. More text about the location and why it’s interesting.

Samples were taken along a transect from the mouth of the bay upstream to the Fish River. More about the sampling. Physiochemical analyses were performed, including TDN, TDP, etc. Water was filtered in sterivex filters and the total DNA extracted. Genes for 16S rRNA and 18S rRNA were sequenced according to Earth Microbiome Project protocols. Amplicon data were analyzed with mothur v.1.37.5 using the Silva v.123 database. Gene sequences were assembled into contigs and clustered into OTUs (0.03 dissimilarity).

PRIMER v7 for non-parametric statistical analysis. Prokaryotes tended to cluster by date of sample collection. Within the parameter of date collected, BEST analysis indicated that TDN and salinity were the abiotic variables that correlated with the community structure. Within the parameter of station, BEST analysis indicated that salinity, CDOM, and pH correlated best with community structure, which is expected as the samples were on a transect from the mouth of the bay to the river.