

Influence of Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement with Olivine or Steel Slag on a Coastal Plankton Community in Tasmania

Jiaying A. Guo^{1,2}, Robert F. Strzepek², Kerrie M. Swadling^{1,2}, Ashley T. Townsend³, Lennart T. Bach¹

¹Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000 Australia

²Australian Antarctic Program Partnership (AAPP), Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000 Australia

³Central Science Laboratory, University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 7005 Australia

Correspondence to: Jiaying A. Guo (Jiaying.guo@utas.edu.au)

Abstract. Ocean alkalinity enhancement (OAE) aims to increase atmospheric CO₂ sequestration in the oceans through the acceleration of chemical rock weathering. This could be achieved by grinding rocks containing alkaline minerals and adding the rock powder to the surface ocean where it dissolves and chemically locks CO₂ in seawater as bicarbonate. However, CO₂ sequestration during dissolution coincides with the release of potentially bio-active chemicals and may induce side effects. Here, we used 53 L microcosms to test how coastal plankton communities from Tasmania respond to OAE with olivine (mainly Mg₂SiO₄) or steel slag (mainly CaO and Ca(OH)₂) as alkalinity sources. Three microcosms were left unperturbed and served as a control, three were enriched with olivine powder (1.9 g L⁻¹), and three with steel slag powder (0.038 g L⁻¹). Olivine and steel slag powders were of similar grain size. Olivine was added in a higher amount than the steel slag since previous tests evidenced that it would have released less alkalinity over the 3-week experiment. Olivine and steel slag powders were of similar grain size, but the amount of added olivine needed to be much higher than the steel slag because less alkalinity is released by the olivine than the steel slag over the 3-week experiment. Phytoplankton and zooplankton community responses as well as some biogeochemical parameters were monitored ~~for 21 days~~. Olivine and steel slag additions increased total alkalinity by 29 μmol kg⁻¹ and 361 μmol kg⁻¹ respectively, which corresponds to a theoretical increase of 0.9 % and 14.8 % of the seawater storage capacity for atmospheric CO₂. Olivine and steel slag released silicate nutrients into the ~~seawater-column~~, but steel slag released considerably more and also significant amounts of phosphate. After 21 days, no significant difference was found in dissolved iron concentrations (>100 nmol L⁻¹) in the treatments and the control. ~~Both minerals released dissolved aluminium (>50 nmol L⁻¹).~~ The slag addition increased dissolved manganese concentrations (771 nmol L⁻¹), while olivine increased dissolved nickel concentrations (37 nmol L⁻¹). ~~Correspondingly, the slag treatment increased the total particulate manganese concentrations (22 nmol L⁻¹), while olivine increased the total particulate nickel (5 nmol L⁻¹), which was consistent with the increase in the dissolved concentrations of these trace metals in seawater.~~ There was no significant difference in total chlorophyll *a* concentrations between the treatments and the control, likely due to nitrogen limitation of the phytoplankton community. However, flow cytometry results indicated an increase in the cellular abundance of several smaller (~<20 μm) phytoplankton groups in the olivine treatment ~~compared to the slag treatment and the control~~. The abundance of larger phytoplankton (~>20 μm) decreased much more in the control than in the ~~mineral addition~~ treatments after day 10. Furthermore, the maximum quantum yields of photosystem II (F_v/F_m) were higher in slag and olivine treatments, suggesting that mineral additions

37 increased photosynthetic performance. The zooplankton community composition was also affected with the most notable
38 changes being observed in the dinoflagellate *Noctiluca scintillans* and the appendicularian *Oikopleura* sp. [in the olivine](#)
39 [treatment](#). Overall, steel slag is much more efficient for CO₂ removal with OAE than olivine and appears to induce less
40 change in the plankton community when relating the CO₂ removal potential to the level of environmental impact that was
41 observed here.

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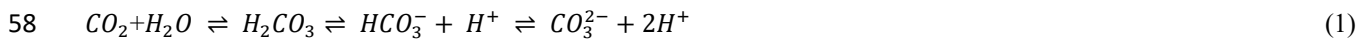
43 1 Introduction

44 Keeping global warming below 2 °C requires immediate emissions reduction. Additionally, between 450-1100 Gigatonnes
45 of carbon dioxide (CO₂) need to be removed from the atmosphere by 2100 (Smith et al., 2023). This could be achieved
46 with a portfolio of terrestrial and marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) methods. Ocean alkalinity enhancement (OAE)
47 is a marine CDR method that could theoretically contribute significantly to the global CDR portfolio (Ilyina et al., 2013;
48 Feng et al., 2017; Lenton et al., 2018).

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50 Alkalinity is generated naturally when rock weathers and it has control on the ocean's chemical capacity to store CO₂
51 (Schuiling and Krijgsman, 2006). Natural rock weathering is currently responsible for about 0.5 Gt of atmospheric CO₂
52 sequestration every year (Renforth and Henderson, 2017). The idea behind OAE is to accelerate natural rock weathering
53 by extracting calcium- or magnesium-rich rocks, such as olivine, pulverizing them, and spreading them onto the sea surface
54 to increase chemical weathering rates (Hartmann et al., 2013). The weathering (i.e., dissolution) of these alkaline minerals
55 will consume protons (H⁺), which shifts the carbonate chemistry equilibrium in seawater from CO₂ towards increasing
56 bicarbonate (HCO₃⁻) and carbonate ion (CO₃²⁻) concentrations:

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60 thereby making new space for atmospheric CO₂ to be dissolved in seawater and permanently stored. Previous model studies
61 have shown that OAE can mitigate climate change significantly by increasing the oceanic uptake of CO₂ from the
62 atmosphere (Kohler et al., 2010; Paquay and Zeebe, 2013; Keller et al., 2014; Lenton et al., 2018). For example, the study
63 by Burt et al. (2021) suggested that the total global mean dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) inventories would increase by
64 156 GtC after total alkalinity is enhanced at a rate of 0.25 Pmol year⁻¹ in 75-year simulations.

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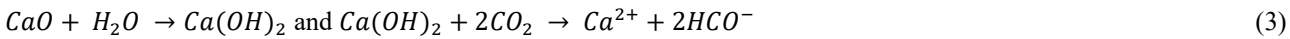
66 There are a variety of alkaline minerals that could be used for OAE. A widely considered naturally occurring mineral is
67 forsterite, a (Mg₂SiO₄)-rich olivine. This type of olivine is abundant in ultramafic rock such as dunite, constituting at least
68 88 % of the rock composition (Ackerman et al., 2009; Su et al., 2016). Olivine occurs in the Earth's crust but is more
69 abundant in the upper mantle. There are at least several billion tons of olivine resources on Earth (Caserini et al., 2022).
70 However, the extraction of olivine in 2017 was only around 8.4 Mt year⁻¹ (Reichl et al., 2018), which is about two orders
71 of magnitude below the mass needed for climate-relevant OAE with olivine (Caserini et al., 2022). The net reaction for
72 CO₂ sequestration with Mg₂SiO₄ is:

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Another potential OAE source material is steel slag (Renforth, 2019), a by-product of steel manufacturing. During steel manufacturing, high-purity calcium oxide (CaO) is used to improve the quality of the steel through accumulation of unwanted materials such as sulphur and phosphorus. Steel slag mainly contains CaO, SiO₂, Al₂O₃, Fe₂O₃, MgO, and MnO (Kourounis et al., 2007), and the chemical composition can vary depending on the manufacturing process (Wang et al., 2011). Due to the presence of CaO and potentially other alkaline components, steel slag can increase alkalinity when dissolved in seawater. The chemical reaction for CO₂ sequestration with CaO is:



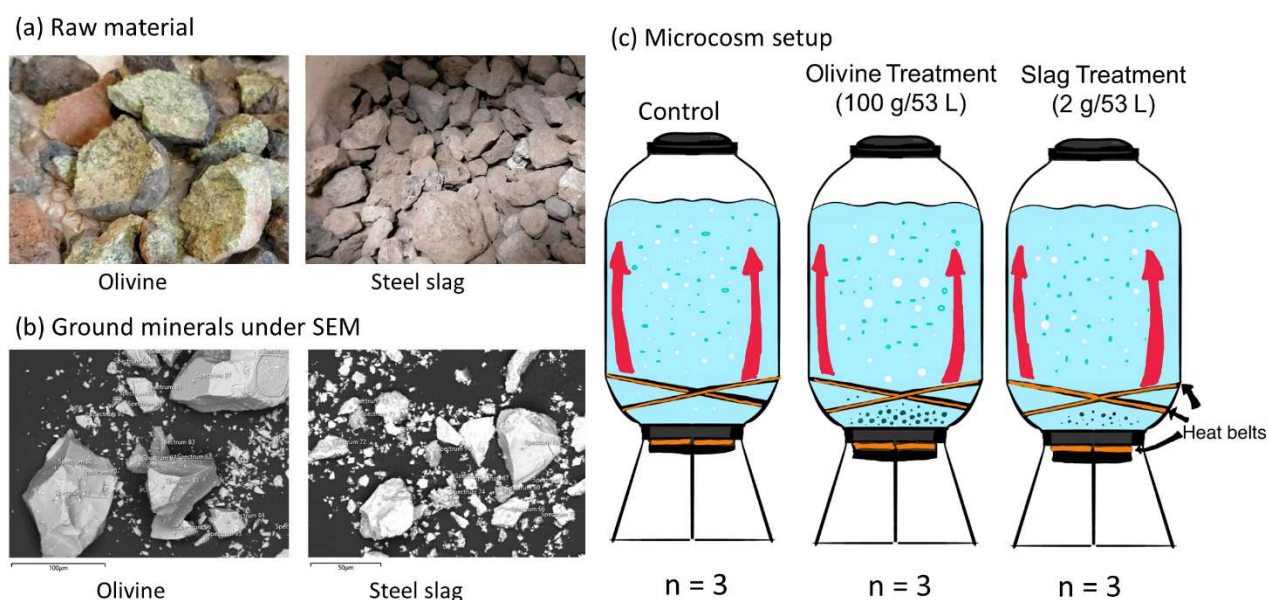
Some of the steel slag that is produced during steel manufacturing is further used (e.g., for road construction and civil engineering) but in some countries like China, 70.5 % of steel slag is left unused and stored in dumps (Guo et al., 2018). In 2016, more than 300 million tons of steel slag was not used effectively, thereby occupying the land and raising environmental concerns (Guo et al., 2018). The effective alkaline composition, availability, and relatively low cost of the raw materials make olivine and steel slag potential source materials for OAE.

To assess whether OAE is viable, it needs to be understood how its application may affect marine biota such as plankton and the biogeochemical fluxes they drive. Some data on the effects of OAE with sodium hydroxide (NaOH) on plankton communities have recently been published (Ferderer et al., 2022; Subhas et al., 2022), but to the best of our knowledge, no such data are available for olivine- and/or slag-based OAE. Chemical perturbations via olivine and slag should be like those by NaOH in that they increase seawater pH and shift the carbonate chemistry equilibrium (see Eq. 1). However, there would be additional chemical perturbations because minerals contain a variety of potentially bioactive elements that are released into the environment when they dissolve in seawater (Bach et al., 2019). One particular concern is that natural and anthropogenic minerals such as olivine and steel slag are rich in bioactive metals that are usually scarce in the ocean, such as iron (Fe), copper (Cu), nickel (Ni), manganese (Mn), zinc (Zn), cadmium (Cd), and chromium (Cr). Many of these trace metals are essential micronutrients for phytoplankton growth (Sunda, 2000; Sunda, 2012), such as being co-factors for various metalloenzymes (summarized by Twining and Baines, 2013). It is possible that the addition of alkaline minerals may benefit phytoplankton by providing trace metals currently limiting phytoplankton growth (Falkowski, 1994; Basu and Mackey, 2018). For instance, the addition of Fe is well known to stimulate phytoplankton blooms in those vast ocean regions where Fe levels limit growth (Boyd et al., 2007; Moore et al., 2013). However, some trace metals can also inhibit phytoplankton growth, and different phytoplankton species have different requirements and tolerances for trace metals (Sunda, 2012) so the addition of trace metals via OAE may change phytoplankton community composition.

Here, we describe a microcosm experiment with coastal Tasmanian plankton communities that was used to investigate: (1) how effectively OAE via the application of finely ground olivine and steel slag could sequester atmospheric CO₂, and (2) if/how olivine and steel slag additions affect various components of the plankton community.

112 2 Methodology

113 2.1 Microcosm setup



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115 **Fig. 1.** Experimental design and alkalinity sources. (a) Raw materials used as alkalinity sources: olivine (left) and steel slag (right).
116 Olivine and steel slag were originally larger than 20 mm. (b) Ground minerals observed with a scanning electron microscope (SEM). (c)
117 Microcosm setup: each microcosm enclosed ~ 53 L of surface seawater with natural plankton communities. Olivine and steel slag
118 treatments and the control were kept in a temperature-controlled room and two heat belts were attached to the bottom of each microcosm
119 to create convective circulation.

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121 We used nine 53 L transparent Kegland® Fermzilla conical unitank fermenters (polyethylene terephthalate) (Fig. 1) as
122 microcosms to incubate natural plankton communities. All microcosms were prewashed with hydrochloric acid (10 % v/v)
123 and rinsed five times with 18.2 MΩ Milli-Q water. Seawater with coastal plankton communities was collected at Battery
124 Point, Tasmania (42.892°S, 147.337°E) within 2 hours by lowering the microcosms into the ocean with a crane and filling
125 them in a manner similar to a Niskin bottle, as described in detail in Ferderer et al. (2022). A sieve with a mesh size of 2
126 mm was attached to the top and bottom of the microcosms during filling to avoid the entrapment of large and patchily
127 distributed organisms in the microcosms. The enclosed seawater weight was initially between 52.35-54.70 kg. After
128 seawater collection, filled microcosms were immediately transported back to the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies
129 (University of Tasmania) on a truck and transferred within 75 min into a temperature-controlled room set to 7.5-8 °C. Two
130 heat belts were attached to the bottom of each microcosm to induce a convective mixing current (Ferderer et al., 2022).
131 Seawater temperature inside the microcosms was about 13.5 °C due to the heating effects of the heat belts and was the
132 same as the sampled region. LED light strips were used to provide an average light intensity of 236 $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$
133 (ranging from 208 to 267 $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$) with a daily light-dark cycle of 10:14 hours. The light intensity was the
134 average light intensity in each microcosm measured with a LICOR light meter at 0.15 m depth within the microcosm.
135 Microcosms positioned in the temperature-controlled room were shuffled anti-clockwise every day to ensure similar light

136 intensity for each microcosm throughout the experiment. Treatments were established 24 hours after collecting the seawater.
137 The total alkalinity released per amount of mineral powder added was much higher for the slag powder than the olivine
138 powder in our preliminary test trials. So, three microcosms were enriched with 100 g of olivine powder, three microcosms
139 with 2 g of steel slag powder, while the remaining three microcosms were left unperturbed and served as controls.

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142 **2.2 Preparation of olivine and steel slag powder**

143 The olivine rocks were provided by Moyne Shire Council who sourced the mineral from a quarry in Mortlake, Victoria,
144 Australia. The Basic Oxygen Slag (hereafter referred to as “slag”) was provided by Bradley Mansell who sourced the
145 material from Liberty Primary Steel Whyalla Steelworks in Whyalla, South Australia, Australia. Upon delivery, the olivine
146 rocks were 40-80 mm in diameter, and slag aggregates were 20-50 mm in diameter. These were crushed to smaller than 10
147 mm pieces using a hydraulic crusher. The crushed material was further ground with a ring mill with a chrome milling pot.
148 Afterwards, finely-ground samples were sieved to get samples with 150 ~ 250 μm grain size. The sieved olivine and slag
149 grains were inspected for their appearance and elemental composition using a Hitachi SU-70 analytical field emission
150 scanning electron microscope (SEM), and energy dispersive spectrometers (Central Science Laboratory (CSL), University
151 of Tasmania). Grain size spectra were determined with a Sympatec QICPIC particle size analyser LIXCELL (CSL,
152 University of Tasmania).

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154 **2.3 Seawater sampling**

155 Seawater was transferred with a peristaltic pump from the microcosms at a depth of about 0.15 m into 1 L acid-washed
156 sampling bottles (LDPE) using an acid-washed silicon tube. Seawater in these bottles was then subsampled for dissolved
157 trace metal samples, filtrations, Fast Repetition Rate fluorometry (FRRf), and flow cytometry analysis. Samples for
158 nutrients and total alkalinity (TA) were transferred using the same pump but through a silicone tube into 80 mL HDPE
159 bottles. Total alkalinity and macronutrient samples were filtered during this process through a 0.2 μm nylon filter attached
160 to the silicone tube to remove all particles and organisms $> 0.2 \mu\text{m}$.

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162 **2.4 Salinity, nutrients, carbonate chemistry, and trace metal analysis**

163 Salinity was measured before and at the end of the experiment using a HACH HQ40d portable meter. The pH_T (total scale)
164 and temperatures were measured daily (2-3 hours after the onset of the light period) using a pH meter (914
165 pH/Conductometer Metrohm). We recorded voltages and temperature from the pH meter and calibrated the pH_T at original
166 temperature at sampled time using the certified reference material (CRM) Tris buffer following the method described in
167 SOP6a by Dickson et al. (2007). Briefly, the standard buffer’s pH and voltage at different temperature gradients were
168 recorded, and temperature vs. voltage polynomial regression data were generated for calculating calibrated pH values (pH_T)
169 (refer to Eq. 3 in SOP6a of Dickson et al. (2007)). The regression could then be used to obtain a CRM pH value for each
170 temperature and to calibrate the pH measured in the microcosms to the total pH scale.

171

172 Total alkalinity was sampled every four days. It was measured in duplicate using a Metrohm 862 Compact Titrosampler
173 coupled with an Aquatrode Plus with PT1000 temperature sensor following the SOP3b open-cell titration protocol
174 described in Dickson et al. (2007). Filtered TA samples were stored at 8 °C for a maximum of 23 days before measurement.
175 Titration curves were evaluated using the “calculate” script within PyCO2sys by Humphreys et al. (2022). The carbon
176 chemistry equilibrium was calculated with the R package “seacarb” Gattuso et al. (2023) from pH_T , TA, phosphate, silicate,
177 temperature, and salinities using stoichiometric equilibrium constants from Lueker et al. (2000). Dissolved macronutrients
178 were measured every second day using standard spectrophotometric methods developed by Hansen and Koroleff (1999)
179 on the day the samples were taken from the microcosms.

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181 Dissolved trace metal concentrations were measured four times during the experiment: a few hours before olivine and slag
182 were added, a few hours after these minerals were added on day 2, near the middle of the experiment on day 13, and at the
183 end of the experiment on day 22. Sixty mL of seawater was collected using an acid-washed 60 mL syringe, and the seawater
184 was filtered through 25 mm diameter 0.2 μm pore size polycarbonate filters. Unfortunately, we did not notice that 0.2 μm
185 pore size nylon filters (acid washed) were used during sampling on days 1 and 2 so we refiltered these seawater samples
186 again using 0.2 μm pore size polycarbonate filters after one month. All seawater samples were diluted approximately 20-
187 fold by weight using Milli-Q water (18.2 $\text{M}\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ grade) and acidified using 1 % ultrapure HCl. These samples were
188 analysed using Sector Field Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (SF-ICP-MS) employing multiple resolution
189 settings to overcome major spectral interferences. Due to the presence of abundant major metal ions in our samples, such
190 as Na and Mg, natural open-ocean seawater from the Southern Ocean with very low trace metal concentrations was diluted
191 20 times with Milli-Q water and used as a representative blank. The same Southern Ocean seawater was enriched with
192 different gradients of trace metal standards to calculate the samples’ trace metal concentrations. Five of the total 36 samples
193 had abnormal trace metal concentrations, and 2 of them were from day 1. We considered values as outliers using the
194 interquartile range (IQR) criterion on pre-addition data, and if values are more than 10 times higher than replicates, they
195 are also considered as outliers. These samples containing outliers were excluded from the data analysis (Table S1.). The
196 major likely source of these metal contaminations is sampling in the temperature control room, where precautions were
197 insufficiently implemented.

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199 **2.5 Particulate matter and plankton community analysis**

200 Chlorophyll *a* was sampled every second day by filtering the seawater through glass fibre filters (GF/F, pore size = 0.7 μm ,
201 diameter = 25 mm), and filters were stored in 15 mL polypropylene tubes wrapped with aluminium foil and stored at -80 °C
202 for 50-70 days before measurement. Each filter was immersed in 10 mL 100 % methanol for 18-20 h to extract chlorophyll
203 from phytoplankton and these samples were analysed on a Turner fluorometer (Model 10-AU) following the method
204 described by Evans et al. (1987).

205

206 Phytoplankton flow cytometry samples were fixed with 40 μL of a mixture of formaldehyde-hexamine (18 %:10 % v/w)
207 added to 1400 μL of seawater sample. All bacteria samples (700 μL) were fixed with 14 μL glutaraldehyde (Electron-
208 microscope grade, 25 %). After mixing samples with fixatives, samples were stored for 25 minutes at 10 °C, then flash-
209 frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored at -80 °C until measurement 83-86 days later. Directly before the measurement,
210 samples were thawed at 37 °C. Bacteria samples were stained with SYBR green I (diluted in dimethylsulfoxide) at a final

211 ratio of 1:10000 (SYBR Green I: sample).

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213 A Cytex Aurora flow cytometer (Cytex Biosciences) was used to quantify the abundance of fluorescing particles such as
214 phytoplankton or stained bacteria. Phytoplankton groups were distinguished based on their fluorescence signal intensity of
215 different laser excitation/emission wavelength combinations and forward scatter (FSC). The yellow-green laser (centre
216 wavelength: 577 nm), in combination with FSC signal strength, was used to separate cyanobacteria and cryptophytes from
217 other phytoplankton. The violet laser (centre wavelength: 664 nm) in combination with FSC was used to distinguish
218 picoeukaryotes, nanoeukaryotes, and microphytoplankton. The blue laser (centre wavelength: 508 nm) in combination with
219 FSC was used to distinguish bacteria from other living (i.e., DNA-containing) particles (Fig. S. 1).

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221 The biovolume of each classified flow cytometry phytoplankton type was calculated using the equation:

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$$223 \text{ Biovolume} = \text{Cell number count} \times \left(\frac{\text{FSC}}{10248}\right)^{2.14} \quad (4)$$

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225 where biovolume is the biovolume of the phytoplankton (μm^3), cell number is the cell count per mL of sample, and the
226 FSC is the forward scatter signal value from the flow cytometry. This equation is calculated based on the relationship
227 between biovolume and FSC for different phytoplankton species (Selfe, 2022). The biovolume of each phytoplankton type
228 was then divided by the total biovolume of all phytoplankton type to calculate the biovolume proportion of each
229 phytoplankton type (Biovolume prop.). This derived value was used to estimate the phytoplankton composition in each
230 microcosm.

231

232 Phytoplankton photosynthetic performance was estimated from the rapid light curves measured with an FRRf (FastOcean
233 Sensor FRRf3, Chelsea Instruments Group) every second day following the protocol adapted from Schallenberg et al.
234 (2020). Samples were kept in the dark for 20 minutes before the measurement and then added to the FRR fluorometry
235 cuvette, which was temperature-controlled at 13.5 °C. Filtered natural seawater was used for blank correction. A channel
236 with three light wavelengths (450, 530, and 624 nm) was used in each acquisition sequence. At least 10 acquisitions were
237 measured for each sample. The maximum electron transport rate (ETR_{max}), initial slope of the rapid light curve (α), and the
238 light-saturation parameter (E_k) were calculated using the equation described by Platt et al. (1980) without photoinhibition:

239

$$240 \text{ ETR} = \text{ETR}_{\text{max}} \left[1 - e^{-\frac{\alpha E}{\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}}}\right] \quad (5)$$

241

242 These parameters together with the maximum quantum yield of PSII (F_v/F_m) were used to compare the photosynthetic
243 performance of the phytoplankton communities in different microcosms.

244

245 Seawater was sampled before the treatment and at the end of the experiment for particulate trace metal concentrations.
246 Samples of 100 mL were filtered through an acid-cleaned polycarbonate filter (25 mm diameter, 0.8 μm pore size) and
247 placed in an acid-cleaned polypropylene filter holder in a trace metal-clean laminar flow bench. The filters were washed
248 with the EDTA-oxalate reagent (1.4 mL) twice (8 min total) and rinsed with chelexed NaCl solution (0.6 mol L⁻¹ with 2.38
249 mmol L⁻¹ of HCO₃⁻, pH=8.2) 10 times (1.5 mL aliquots) (Tovar-Sanchez et al., 2003; Tang and Morel, 2006). Filters were
250 stored in acid-washed well plates at -20 °C before analysis. The digestion process followed the method reported by Bowie

251 et al. (2010). Briefly, all samples and triplicate certified reference materials plankton standards (50 mg/vial) were digested
252 in a mixture of strong ultrapure acids (750 μL 12 mol L^{-1} HCl, 250 μL 40 % HF, 250 μL 14 mol L^{-1} HNO_3) in 15 mL Teflon
253 perfluoroalkoxy (PFA) vials on a 95 °C hot plate for 12 h in a fume hood. They were then dry evaporated for 4 h and re-
254 suspended in 10 % v-v ultrapure HNO_3 . All prepared solutions had indium as internal standard added to a final
255 concentration of 10 μg L^{-1} . Three pre-mixed multi-element standard solutions (MISA) were prepared as external calibration
256 standards.

257

258 Particulate organic carbon (POC) was sampled by filtering 100 mL of seawater from each microcosm. Glass fibre filters
259 (Whatman GF/F, pore size = 0.7 μm , diameter = 13 mm) were pre-combusted at 400 °C for 6 h. Filters were stored at -20 °C
260 before measurement. Samples were treated via fuming with 2N HCl to remove carbonates overnight and dried in the oven
261 for 4h. Finally, filters were folded into silver cups and stored in a desiccator until analysis. Samples were analysed for
262 carbon with a Thermo Finnigan EA 1112 Series Flash Elemental Analyser (CSL, University of Tasmania).

263

264 Biogenic silica (BSi) concentrations were analysed every 4 days by filtering 100 mL of seawater from each microcosm.
265 Mixed Cellulose Ester (MCE) membrane filters (diameter = 25 mm, pore size = 0.8 μm) were used for BSi samples. BSi
266 filters were placed in a plastic petri dish and stored at -20 °C before measurement. Filters were processed using the hot
267 NaOH digestion method of Nelson et al. (1989). The final solution was measured using the same process as the dissolved
268 silicate (see section 2.4).

269

270 A self-made plastic zooplankton net (20 mm height and 15 mm width) with a 210 μm mesh size was acid-washed first and
271 then used to collect zooplankton from microcosms before mineral addition on day 2, near the middle (day 13), and at the
272 end of the experiment (day 23). Samples were stored in 10 % formalin seawater solutions and kept at room temperature
273 until measurements. Zooplankton were quantified and identified under a Leica M165C microscope fitted with a Canon 5D
274 camera. The number of zooplankton from one mini-trawl in each collection was converted to the unit of individual L^{-1} and
275 used for data analysis. The diversity of zooplankton communities was estimated with the Shannon Diversity Index (H)
276 calculated as:

277

$$278 \quad H = -\sum(pi \times \ln(pi)) \quad (6)$$

279

280 where pi is the proportion of the entire zooplankton community made up of individual species abundance, and ln is the
281 natural logarithm.

282

283

284 **2.6 Statistic analysis**

285 R studio was used for data analyses. Generalized additive models (GAMs) from the package “mgcv” were fitted to the data
286 to predict the changes over time. The GAMs all shared the same equations:

287

$$288 \quad Y = s(\text{Day}), \quad (7)$$

289

290 in which Y presents the dependent variable and s(Day) is the smooth term of the day of the experiment. Another GAM was
291 used to detect significant differences between treatments and the control:

292

$$293 \quad Y = Treatment + s(Day) + s(Day, by = oTreatment) \quad (8)$$

294

295 In this equation, the variable “Treatment” includes three conditions: “Control”, “Slag” and “Olivine”; while “oTreatment”
296 is the ordered factor of the variable “Treatment” which allowed us to compare the GAMs smooth terms from different
297 treatments and the control (Simpson, 2017).

298

299 When comparing GAMs, P-means represent the p-value obtained from comparing two GAMs, such as the control and the
300 olivine treatment. If P-means is below 0.05, it indicates that the mean values of the two GAMs exhibit significant
301 differences over the course of the experiment. Conversely, if P-means is equal to or greater than 0.05, it suggests that the
302 two GAMs have similar mean values. In contrast, P-smooths represents the p-value derived from comparing the smooth
303 terms of two GAMs. If P-smooths is below 0.05, it indicates that the two GAMs demonstrate significantly different trends
304 in their change over time.

305

306 For the analysis of trace metal concentrations and zooplankton abundance, Generalized Linear Models (GLMs) from the
307 'stats' package were fitted to the data to determine significant differences between treatments and the control. The selection
308 of specific GLMs was based on the distribution of the raw data. One GLM equation is

309

$$310 \quad Y = Treatment + \frac{Day}{22} + \left(\frac{Day}{22}\right)^2 \quad (9)$$

311

312 with family = Gamma, where Y represents the measured parameter (abundance of a zooplankton species and dissolved
313 trace metal concentrations); treatment is the conditions (“Control”, “Slag” and “Olivine”); and Day represents the day of
314 the experiment. The other GLM equation,

315

$$316 \quad Y = Treatment + Day \quad (10)$$

317

318 with family = Gaussian, was employed for particulate trace metal data and the Shannon Diversity Index. To compare the
319 contribution of the three treatments on the measured parameters, Tukey's significant difference test was conducted on the
320 GLMs using the 'glht' function.

321

322 **3. Results**

323 **3.1 Elemental composition and grain size of the finely-ground minerals**

324 SEM analysis revealed the approximate elemental composition of olivine and slag powder (Table 1). Based on this analysis
325 the olivine composition resembles the Mg-rich olivine mineral “forsterite” (Mg₂SiO₄). The particle size spectrum of olivine
326 powder is shown in detail in Fig. S2. Roughly 69 % of the olivine particles, when measured by volume, fell within the

327 diameter range of 35 - 300 μm . Additionally, SEM analysis revealed high levels of Ca and O in the slag, indicative of the
 328 considerable $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and CaO content of the powder (Table 1; please note that H cannot be measured with the applied
 329 method). The particle size measurement (Fig. S2) showed that 78 % of the ground slag particles were between 35 - 300
 330 μm .

331

332 **Table 1.** The weight percentage of elements from two minerals. Unit: wt %.

Element	O	Ca	Mn	Si	Mg	Fe	Al	Ti	Cr	Ni
Olivine	39.9	0.4		19.9	26.4	13.0	1.0			0.8
Steel slag	41.9	36.0	7.0	6.5	4.3	3.7	3.4	1.7	1.6	

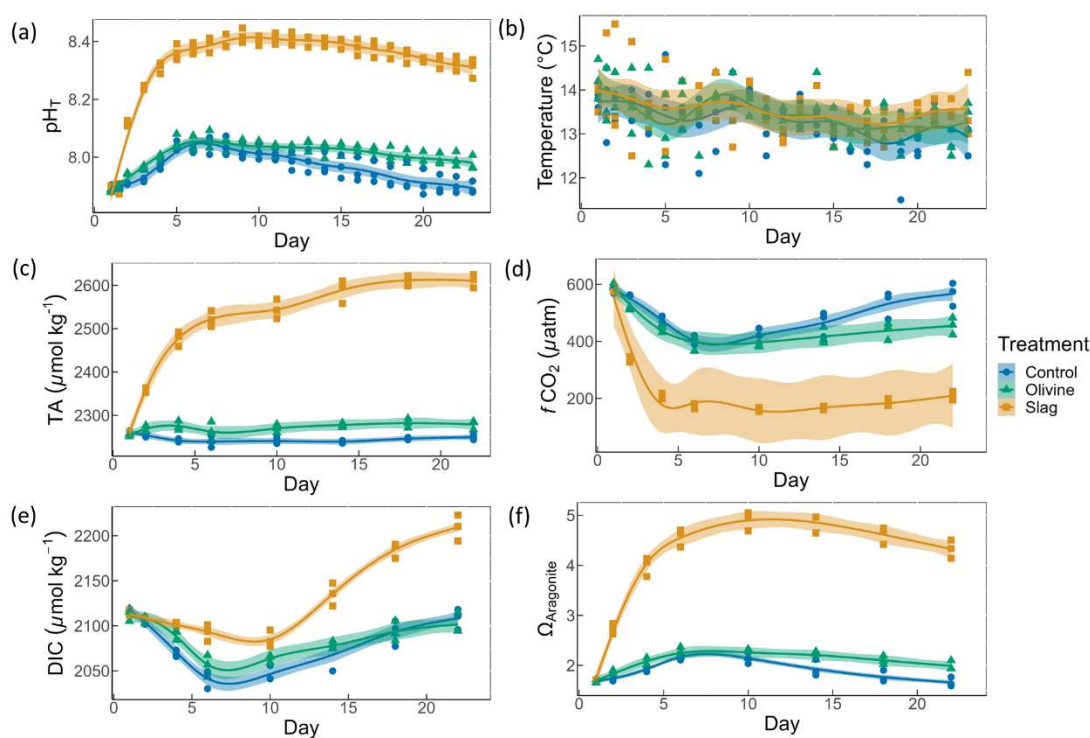
333

334

335 3.2 Physical and chemical conditions over the course of the experiment.

336 On day 2 of the experiment, when olivine particles were introduced into the microcosms, the smallest fraction of the powder
 337 remained suspended, causing the seawater to become highly turbid for several days. The resulting milky appearance of the
 338 seawater eventually faded over a period of approximately five days, and by day 5, the turbidity had visually become like
 339 the slag treatment and the control. This effect was not anticipated, and as a result, we decided to investigate its impact on
 340 light intensity. To do so, a test was conducted after the main experiment in which olivine powder was added to a microcosm
 341 identical to those used in the experiment, and light intensity was measured daily at a depth of 0.15 m. The results showed
 342 that the addition of olivine caused an initial reduction in light intensity of 18.5 % at 15 mins after addition, which declined
 343 to 7.4 %, 3.7 %, 3.7 % and 0 % after 1, 2, 3, and 4 days, respectively. These findings indicate that olivine additions can
 344 significantly affect the light environment in the microcosms, whereas no such effect was observed in the slag treatment.

345



346

347 **Fig. 2.** Carbonate chemistry conditions. The temporal development of (a) pH_T , (b) temperature, (c) total alkalinity (TA), (d) CO_2 fugacity

348 ($f\text{CO}_2$) computed at *in situ* temperature and atmospheric pressure, (e) dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC), and (f) aragonite saturation state
349 ($\Omega_{\text{aragonite}}$). The dots represent the raw data ($n=3$ for each treatment per sampling time), and the fitted curve is the generalized additive
350 model (GAM). The shading represents the 95 % confidence interval of the fitted GAM.

351

352 The pH_T of all microcosms increased from day 1 to day 5 (Fig. 2a). This was due to photosynthetic CO_2 drawdown in the
353 control or photosynthetic CO_2 drawdown in combination with alkalinity release from minerals in the treatments. During
354 the peak of the bloom, pH_T was 8.037 ± 0.010 in the control (average values \pm standard error), 8.054 ± 0.014 in the olivine
355 treatment and 8.411 ± 0.015 in the slag treatment. The pH_T was significantly higher in the slag than the olivine treatment
356 and the control throughout the experiment (control and olivine pH_T were not significantly different). The ~~final~~ pH_T on day
357 23 of the control, olivine, and slag treatments were 7.893 ± 0.012 , 7.978 ± 0.015 , and 8.309 ± 0.019 , respectively. The
358 temperature inside of the microcosms varied between replicates, which may have added noise in the biological response
359 data. However, on average there was no statistically significant difference between control/treatments during the
360 experiment.

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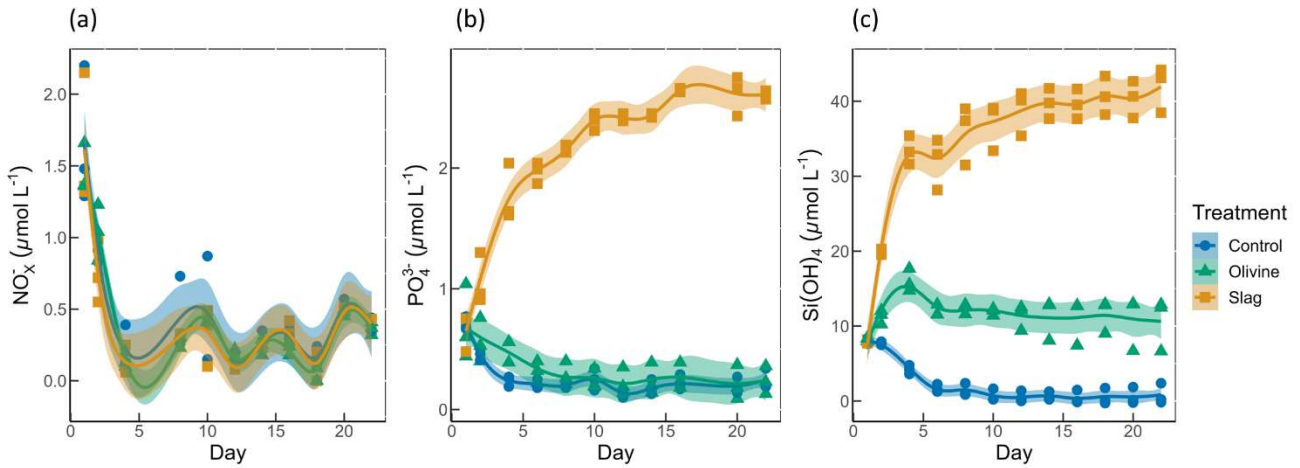
362 In our data analysis, all the fitted GAMs from the treatments and the control exhibited significant differences in pH_T from
363 each other, as evidenced by the p-values of both P-means and P-smooths being smaller than 0.001. For detailed results of
364 the GAM p-values, please refer to Table S2.

365

366 Total alkalinity increased marginally from 2255 ± 2 to $2262 \pm 13 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ within the first 6 days after olivine addition
367 while it increased more substantially from 2259 ± 1 to $2522 \pm 11 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ in the same time span in the slag treatment (Fig.
368 2c). The TA in the control decreased from $2261 \pm 2 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ to $2240 \pm 7 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ from day 1 to day 6 but remained
369 stable thereafter. The TA reached $2279 \pm 6 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ in the olivine treatment and $2611 \pm 9 \mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ in the slag treatment
370 on day 22. The slag treatment reached a significantly higher TA than the olivine treatment and the control (P-smooths <
371 0.001). The mean TA from GAM in olivine treatment was higher than the control (P-means < 0.001).

372

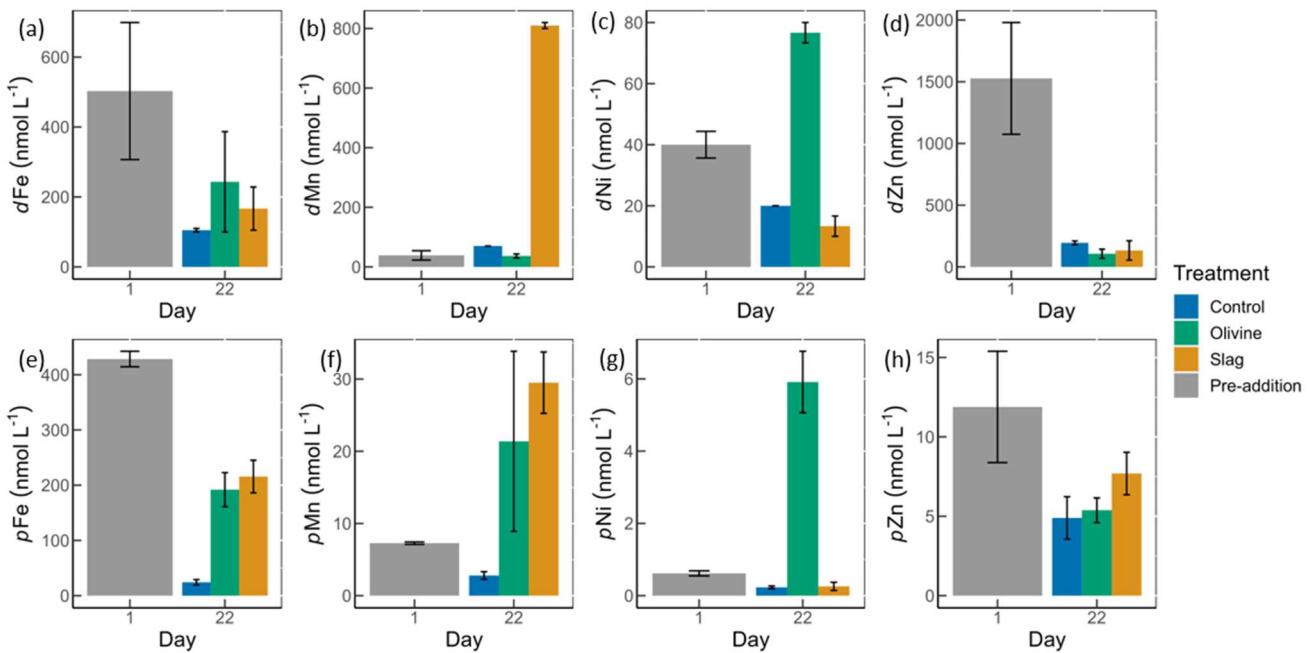
373 The CO_2 fugacity ($f\text{CO}_2$) computed at *in situ* temperature and atmospheric pressure decreased continuously in the first 6
374 days in all microcosms (Fig. 2d). Then it increased again in the control and olivine treatments while staying lower in the
375 slag treatment (P-means and P-smooths ≤ 0.001 between either treatment or the control). Dissolved inorganic carbon (Fig.
376 2e) and the aragonite saturation state ($\Omega_{\text{aragonite}}$; Fig. 2f) revealed a similar trend over the course of the experiment in the
377 control and the olivine treatment. In contrast, the slag treatment had higher DIC and $\Omega_{\text{aragonite}}$ values throughout the
378 experiment (P-means < 0.001).



379
 380 **Fig. 3.** Macronutrients concentrations over the course of the study. (a) Nitrate and nitrite concentrations. (b) Phosphate concentrations.
 381 (c) Silicic acid concentrations. The dots represent the raw data ($n=3$ for each treatment per collection), and the fitted curve is the
 382 generalized additive model.

383
 384 Initial nitrate and nitrite (NO_x^-), phosphate (PO_4^{3-}), and silicic acid (Si(OH)_4) concentrations were 1.58 ± 0.12 , 0.69 ± 0.59 ,
 385 and $8.04 \pm 0.10 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$, respectively (Fig. 3). NO_x^- declined rapidly in all microcosms once the experiment had
 386 commenced to values below $0.5 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ and no significant difference was detected between treatments and control (P -
 387 smooths >0.05 ; Fig. 3a). In both the olivine treatment and the control, the PO_4^{3-} concentration decreased in the first six
 388 days (Fig. 3b). In the slag treatment, PO_4^{3-} increased to a maximum of $2.65 \pm 0.01 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$, which was significantly higher
 389 than in the olivine treatment and the control (P -means <0.001). The Si(OH)_4 concentration increased to a maximum of
 390 $15.99 \pm 0.87 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ in the olivine treatment, increased to a maximum of $41.92 \pm 1.75 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ in the slag treatment, but
 391 decreased below the detection limit in the control (Fig. 3c). Significant differences were observed in the development of
 392 Si(OH)_4 between all treatments and the control (Table S2).

393



394
 395

396 **Fig. 4.** Dissolved and particulate trace metal concentrations in microcosm seawater. (a)-(d) are dissolved trace metal concentrations, and
397 (e)-(h) are total particulate trace metal concentrations. The error bars represent the standard error from measured samples. The pre-
398 addition data shown in (a)-(d) represent the average of 7 microcosms before addition of slag or olivine. The data for the control on day
399 22 in (a)-(d) and for the pre-addition on day 1 in (e)-(h) were based on two of three microcosm replicates. The remaining data were based
400 on all three microcosm replicates.

401

402 The dissolved trace metal concentrations measured from microcosms are presented in Fig. S3. While the mass of olivine
403 added to the microcosms was 50-fold greater [than in steel slag](#) (100 g vs 2 g), it's noteworthy that the variation in dissolved
404 trace metal concentrations between the two treatments were much smaller than 50 folds. After 21 days of experiment, the
405 treatments showed an increase in dissolved Al concentrations from 920 ± 286 to 970 ± 228 nmol L⁻¹ in olivine treatment,
406 and from 920 ± 286 to 1093 ± 77 nmol L⁻¹ in slag treatment, while in the control dissolved Al decreased to 230 ± 10 nmol
407 L⁻¹ (Fig. S3). The fitted GLMs were compared, and the p-value revealed how much influence a treatment had on the
408 dissolved metal concentrations (Table S3). The results indicate that the slag and olivine additions led to significantly higher
409 Al concentrations than in the control (p-values < 0.05), but no significant difference was found between the two treatments
410 (p-value = 0.189). The Cu concentration in the olivine on day 22 was significantly higher than the slag treatment and the
411 control (p-value < 0.05) (Fig. S3). The addition of olivine and slag released some dissolved Fe, but overall, the concentration
412 of Fe did not differ significantly between treatments (Fig. 4a, Table S3). The slag released a substantial amount of dissolved
413 Mn (maximum 810 ± 10 nmol L⁻¹ on day 22) (Fig. 4b), leading to significantly higher concentrations than in the olivine
414 treatment and the control (p-values < 0.001). A significant amount of dissolved Ni (maximum 77 ± 3 nmol L⁻¹ on day 22)
415 was released from the olivine powder (p-values < 0.001) (Fig. 4c). The initial concentration of dissolved Zn in seawater
416 was much higher than on day 22 in all microcosms, and no significant difference in Zn concentrations was found between
417 the treatments and the control.

418

419 Particulate concentrations of some trace metals also differed between treatments. The total particulate Fe decreased in all
420 microcosms on day 22 comparing with the pre-addition level, but both mineral addition treatments had higher particulate
421 Fe concentrations than the control (Fig. 4e). The addition of slag elevated particulate Mn concentrations to a level higher
422 than the pre-addition and the control on day 22 (Fig. 4f), while the addition of olivine increased the particulate Ni
423 concentrations to a level higher than the slag, the control, and the pre-addition (Fig. 4g). The particulate Zn concentrations
424 in general decreased by the end of the experiment (Fig. 4h), and no significant differences were found between the
425 treatments and the control.

426

427 The POC on day 1 and day 22 from all microcosms were very similar, 10.99 ± 0.58 and 11.03 ± 0.41 $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ respectively
428 (Fig. S4) so the metal:POC results were consistent with the particulate trace metal results (Fig. 4 e-h). In general, the non-
429 surface metal:POC are positively correlated with the total metal:POC ratios (Fig. S5). The ratio of non-surface to total
430 particulate trace metal concentrations is summarized in Table S5. Both non-surface and total Fe concentrations decreased
431 in microcosms on day 22 compared with the pre-addition level. Iron:POC ratios were significantly higher in the treatments
432 than in the control on day 22 (p-values < 0.05, Table S3), and there was no significant difference between mineral addition
433 treatments. The non-surface to total Fe:POC ratios were > 0.94 in all microcosms on both day 1 and day 22. The total and
434 non-surface Mn:POC ratio was the highest in the slag treatment. These ratios were higher than the pre-addition level and
435 the control at the end of the experiment. The total particulate Ni concentrations in the olivine treatment were significantly
436 higher than before olivine addition. The olivine treatment led to a >22-fold higher Ni:POC ratio compared to the other two

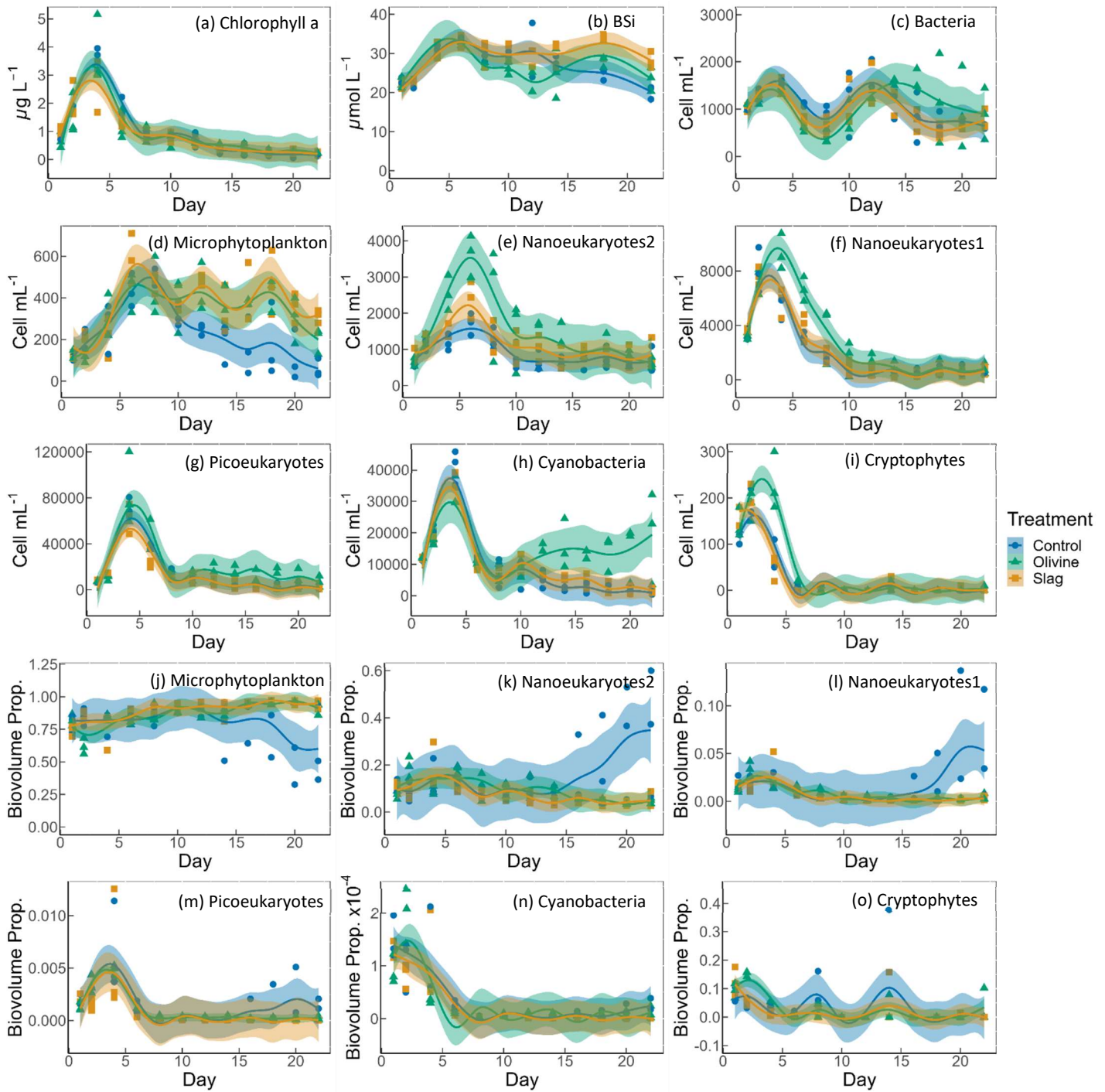
437 treatments (p-value <0.001).

438

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441 **3.3 Development and physiology of the plankton community**



442

443 **Fig. 5.** Temporal development of chlorophyll a concentration (chl-a), BSi, and different eukaryotic and bacterial plankton groups as
444 determined with flow cytometry. (a) chlorophyll a; (b) BSi; cell concentrations of (c) heterotrophic bacteria, (d) microphytoplankton, (e)

445 nanoeukaryotes2, (f) nanoeukaryotes1 (g) picoeukaryotes, (h) cyanobacteria, and (i) cryptophytes; biovolume proportion of (j)
446 microphytoplankton, (k) nanoeukaryotes2, (l) nanoeukaryotes1 (m) picoeukaryotes, (n) cyanobacteria, and (o) cryptophytes. The figure
447 data points represent the raw data, and the fitted curve is the generalized additive model. The shaded area represents the 95 % confidence
448 interval.

449

450 The chl-a concentration in all microcosms increased from day 1 to day 4 from $1 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ to $3\text{--}4 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ (Fig. 5a). The chl-a
451 concentration then decreased rapidly from day 4 to day 8, then continued to decrease, though more slowly, to $<0.3 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$
452 until the end of the experiment. The GAMs of chl-a did not show any difference between treatments and the control (both
453 P-means and P-smooths >0.05 , see Table S2).

454

455 The BSi concentration increased from day 1 to day 6 in all microcosms (Fig. 5b). In the olivine treatments, BSi
456 concentrations decreased slightly after the peak until day 12 but then increased again. In the slag treatment, BSi
457 concentrations remained relatively stable after the initial phytoplankton bloom. In contrast, BSi concentration decreased
458 continuously in the control after the initial peak. Olivine particles suspended in seawater after the mineral addition (see
459 section 3.2) partially ended up on BSi filters during filtration. This led to extremely high BSi measurements on days 2 and
460 4 that were removed from Fig. 5b. Without these outliers, the mean of fitted BSi GAM in the olivine treatment was lower
461 than the control and the slag treatment (Table S2), and the slag [treatment](#) had the highest average BSi over the course of
462 the experiment. Overall, the BSi trends in the two treatments were similar (P-smooths = 0.269), and both were significantly
463 different from the control (P-smooths <0.05).

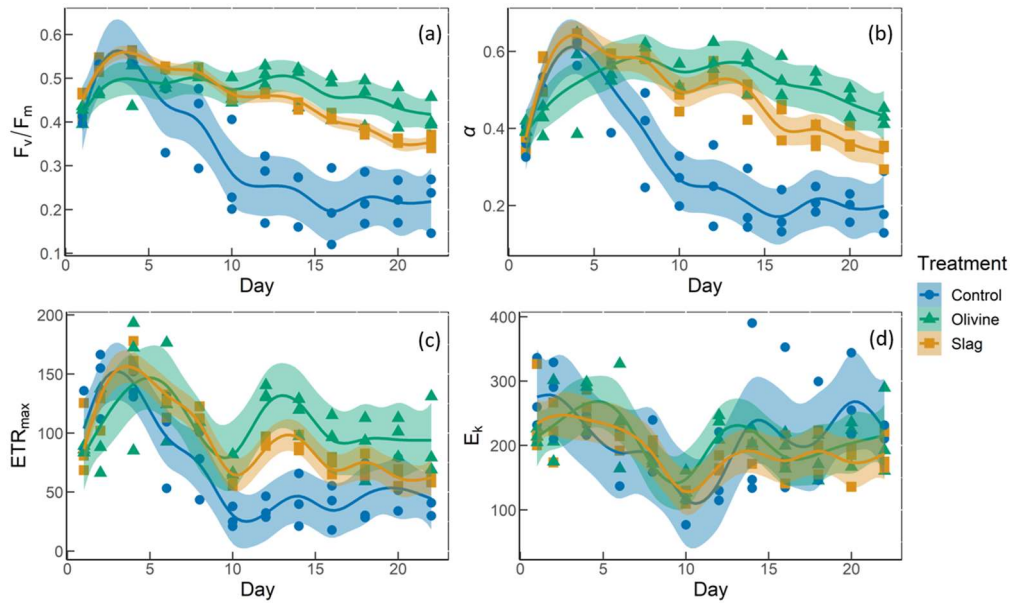
464

465 The development of the phytoplankton community composition showed significant differences between the treatments and
466 the control. In general, most phytoplankton groups exhibited similar patterns to chl-a, with peak cell numbers occurring on
467 day 4 (Fig. 5f-i) apart from microphytoplankton and nanoeukaryotes2 which had the peak delayed for 1-2 days (Fig. 5d-
468 e). Please be aware that flow cytometers may not capture some large and chain-forming phytoplankton. After reaching
469 peak values during the bloom, phytoplankton abundance generally decreased steadily. Microphytoplankton displayed
470 similar trends to the results for BSi. Before day 10, all microcosms had similar microphytoplankton abundances (Fig. 5d).
471 However, in the control, microphytoplankton abundance declined continuously and at a faster rate compared to the two
472 treatments (P-smooths values <0.03). From day 2 to day 6, the abundance of nanoeukaryotes1, nanoeukaryotes2,
473 picoeukaryotes, and cryophytes was higher in the olivine treatment compared to the slag treatment and the control. After
474 day 8, their abundance in the olivine treatment decreased to a similar level as the slag treatment and the control. Notably,
475 there were few significant differences observed between the slag treatment and the control in terms of the abundances of
476 nanoeukaryotes1, nanoeukaryotes2, picoeukaryotes, cyanobacteria, and cryptophytes throughout the experiment. In the
477 olivine treatment, cyanobacteria experienced a second bloom after day 10, which was significantly different from the other
478 two groups (P-smooths <0.01). Heterotrophic bacteria exhibited an increase and decline pattern following the
479 phytoplankton bloom until day 8 (Fig. 5c). Subsequently, bacteria abundance increased again, reaching a second peak
480 during days 12-14, followed by a decline until the end of the experiment. The decline in bacteria abundance was slower in
481 the olivine treatment, although no significant differences were detected between treatments (Table S2).

482

483 Among all the microcosms, microphytoplankton consistently accounted for the largest proportion of biovolume. From the
484 perspective of biovolume proportion, the mineral addition mainly influenced the microphytoplankton and nanoeukaryotes.
485 The control had similar phytoplankton biovolume distribution as the treatments from day 1 to day 15, but after that the

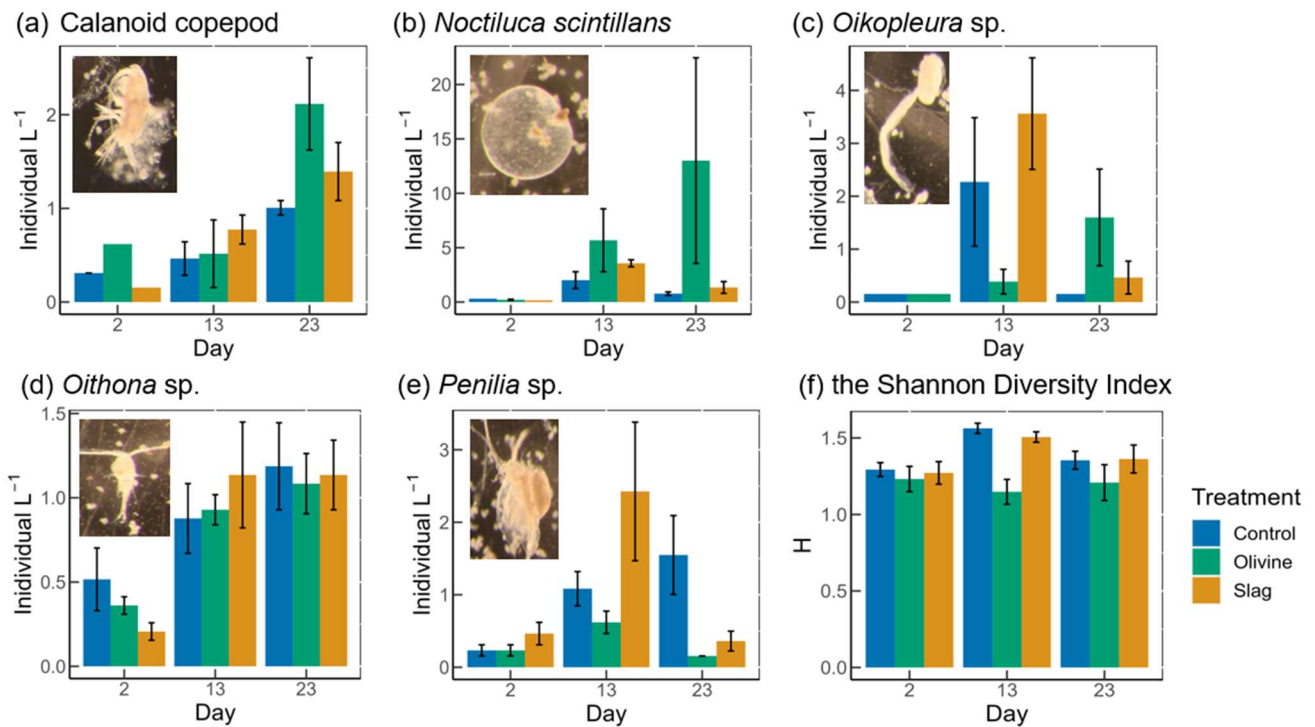
486 proportion of microphytoplankton biovolume decreased to a level significantly lower than the treatments. In the control
 487 treatment, the proportion of nanoeukaryotes' biovolume increased as the proportion of microphytoplankton decreased. The
 488 biovolume of picoeukaryotes, cyanobacteria and cryptophytes increased during the phytoplankton bloom and then
 489 decreased drastically after the bloom. There were no significant differences in biovolume proportion observed for
 490 picoeukaryotes, cyanobacteria and cryptophytes between the treatments and the control.
 491



492
 493 **Fig. 6.** The photosynthetic performance of the phytoplankton community. (a) F_v/F_m , the maximum quantum yield of photosynthesis II.
 494 (b) α , the initial slope of the rapid light curves. (c) ETR_{max} is the maximum electron transport rate, the maximum potential photosynthetic
 495 rate. (d) E_k is light-saturation parameter, Unit: $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$.

496
 497 The temporal development of F_v/F_m , α , ETR_{max} , and E_k is illustrated in Fig. 6. The F_v/F_m values of the phytoplankton
 498 community were approximately 0.42 ± 0.01 and increased to levels > 0.5 during the peak of the phytoplankton bloom on
 499 day 4 (Fig. 6a). Following the bloom, F_v/F_m values dropped below 0.3 in the control. However, the decline in F_v/F_m after
 500 the bloom was less pronounced in the two mineral addition treatments with the olivine treatment maintaining higher F_v/F_m
 501 values than the slag treatment (P-smooths < 0.05). At the end of the experiment, F_v/F_m was 0.22 ± 0.04 in the control, 0.35
 502 ± 0.01 in the slag treatment, and 0.42 ± 0.02 in the olivine treatment. The temporal development of α aligned with the
 503 patterns observed for F_v/F_m (compare Fig. 6a and 6b). The maximum values of ETR_{max} were observed on day 4 in the
 504 control and the slag treatment, while in the olivine treatment, it occurred on day 5 (Fig. 6c). Subsequently, ETR_{max}
 505 continuously decreased until day 10 and then stabilized until the end of the experiment. However, ETR_{max} exhibited a
 506 subsequent increase in the mineral treatments around day 12. The ETR_{max} values were higher in the mineral treatments
 507 compared to the control group (P-means < 0.001 , Table S2). The parameter E_k decreased from $246 \pm 17 \mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2}$
 508 s^{-1} on day 1 to $121 \pm 7 \mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ on day 10, and then it increased again to approximately $200 \mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2}$
 509 s^{-1} by the end of the experiment (Fig. 6d). The change in E_k did not exhibit significant differences between the treatments
 510 and the control (both P-means and P-smooths > 0.05).

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Fig. 7. The dominant zooplankton abundance and community diversity from different treatments. Abundance of dominant zooplankton in microcosms: (a) calanoid copepod; (b) *Noctiluca scintillans*; (c) *Oikopleura* sp.; (d) *Oithona* sp.; (e) *Penilia* sp.; and (f) the Shannon diversity index (H) of different treatments and the control. Error bars represent the standard error calculated from three microcosm replicates. Photographs of each zooplankton group are shown on the corresponding graphs.

Thirteen zooplankton taxonomic groups were identified in the microcosms. The dominant taxa were the appendicularian *Oikopleura* sp., the cyclopoid copepod *Oithona* sp., the cladoceran *Penilia* sp., the heterotrophic dinoflagellate *Noctiluca scintillans* and several calanoid copepods including *Acartia* sp., *Paracalanus* sp. and *Gladioferens* sp. The larvae and eggs of *Oikopleura*, *Penilia* and copepod were also observed under the microscope. In general, higher zooplankton numbers were observed after the bloom on day 13 (Fig. 7). The abundance of calanoid copepods and *Oithona* sp. increased after day 2 (Fig. 7a, d), and there was no significant difference between treatments and the control (p-values >0.05, Table S4). The abundance of *N. scintillans* increased significantly more in the olivine treatment than in the control and the slag treatment, with highest abundance of 13 ± 9 individual L^{-1} observed in the olivine treatment on the last day (Fig. 7b). The abundance of *Oikopleura* in the control and the slag treatment was higher than the olivine treatment on day 13 but was higher in the olivine treatment on day 22 (Fig. 7c). A higher abundance of *Penilia* sp. was found in the slag treatment on day 13 and in the control on day 23 (Fig. 7e). Due to the patchy distribution of zooplankton, these data have large standard errors and only the differences in the numbers of *N. scintillans* in the olivine treatment were statistically significantly different from the slag treatment and the control (p-value <0.05, Table S4).

Considering the control and slag treatment, the Shannon Diversity Index (H) increased from day 2 to day 13 and declined on day 23, while in the olivine treatment, H was lower on day 13 than on day 2 and day 23 (Fig. 7f). The GLMs revealed that the olivine treatment had significantly lower H on day 13 than the control and the slag treatment (p-values <0.001). There were no significant differences in H between the control and the slag treatment (Table S4). The addition of olivine decreased the zooplankton community's diversity. This is mainly driven by distinct trends observed in the abundance of *Oikopleura* sp., *Penilia* sp., and *N. scintillans* (Fig. 7).

539

540 4. Discussion

541 4.1 CO₂ removal potential of slag and olivine

542 The slag powder created significantly higher CO₂ removal potential than the olivine powder over the course of the study.
543 Ca(OH)₂ and CaO in slag and Mg₂SiO₄ in olivine are likely to be the main functional minerals driving the measured
544 alkalinity enhancement. Total alkalinity increased by 361 μmol kg⁻¹ in the slag treatment while it increased by only 29
545 μmol kg⁻¹ in the olivine treatment, equivalent to a potential increase in marine inorganic carbon by 14.7 and 0.9% within
546 3 weeks of their application. When normalizing these alkalinity increases to the same material weight, 1 g of slag would
547 release 9626 μmol TA while 1 g of olivine would release 16 μmol TA. Thus, over 3 weeks of experimental incubation, slag
548 is ~600-fold more efficient in releasing alkalinity for particles of this size class (please note that particle size spectra of
549 olivine and slag were similar but not identical; Fig. S1). We can also use these values to make a rough estimate of how
550 much CO₂ these two minerals could potentially sequester. One mole of alkalinity from olivine and slag can sequester
551 approximately 0.85 mole of CO₂. Thus, one tonne of slag and olivine powder as used here could sequester 360 and 0.6 kg,
552 respectively, within 3 weeks. It is likely that optimization of particle size and application method may lead to higher
553 efficiencies. Nevertheless, the slag showed potential as an OAE source mineral, even when applied as relatively coarse
554 powder in this experiment.

555

556 4.2 Environmental implications of slag and olivine additions

557 The amount of olivine and slag powder added to the treatments differed significantly (100 g of olivine powder were added
558 while only 2 g of slag powder were added to the 53 L microcosms). Our rationale for these different mass additions was to
559 yield somewhat similar amounts of detectable alkalinity enhancement in the dissolved phase, since we already knew from
560 tests before the experiment that slag elevates alkalinity faster than olivine. However, olivine was less efficient in releasing
561 alkalinity than we had anticipated so that even a 50-fold higher addition of olivine (in mass) did not compensate for this
562 difference. As such, our experiments are associated with an “apples and oranges issue” in that our perturbation with
563 minerals and associated OAE differs. We [note/argue](#) that an adjusted addition of minerals depending on the alkalinity
564 enhancement rate would be consistent with what OAE practitioners may do under real-world conditions. Presumably, OAE
565 deployments may have to adjust the amounts of minerals to detect alkalinity enhancement in the dissolved phase for
566 verification purposes. Nevertheless, to account for the “apples and oranges issue”, the following discussion mainly relates
567 the observed environmental effects with the alkalinity enhancement achieved over the course of the study.

568 4.2.1. OAE effects on phytoplankton physiology and community

569 Previous research has hypothesised that OAE-induced changes in seawater carbonate chemistry could delay phytoplankton
570 bloom formation due to reductions in seawater *p*CO₂ in the aftermath of an OAE deployment (Bach et al., 2019). The build-
571 up of chlorophyll *a* concentration as observed here was indistinguishable between treatments and the control, suggesting
572 no effect of slag- or olivine-based OAE on phytoplankton bloom dynamics under these experimental settings. A lack of
573 bloom delay due to carbonate chemistry is unsurprising for the olivine treatment where the release of alkalinity was small

574 (29 $\mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ alkalinity release), but somewhat more surprising in the slag treatment where alkalinity was quite rapidly
575 increased by 361 $\mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$. However, the release was still lower than in a very similar study by Ferderer et al., (2022)
576 where alkalinity was increased by 500 $\mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ using sodium hydroxide and even there they did not observe a bloom
577 delay. Based on this very limited evidence, it seems that bloom delays do not occur consistently under OAE [within the](#)
578 [alkalinity ranges tested in this study](#)~~within this alkalinity range.~~

579
580 The nutrient data show that the phytoplankton community was most likely N-limited after day 4 so that the release of
581 $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$ from olivine and $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$ and PO_4^{3-} from slag did not stimulate a further increase in chlorophyll-*a* concentration
582 in the treatments. The development of BSi concentrations is indicative of the prevalence of diatoms in the microcosms but
583 differences between treatments and the control were small. The release of $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$ through olivine and slag will most likely
584 benefit diatoms but this fertilization effect did not manifest in this specific experiment because N was limiting diatom
585 growth. However, when new N is supplied then diatoms will likely take a bigger share of the limiting N pool when olivine
586 or slag are used for OAE, as has been shown in $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$ manipulation experiments in and outside the context of OAE
587 research (Egge and Jacobsen, 1997; Ferderer et al., 2023).~~As such, diatoms are likely to benefit from olivine and slag~~
588 ~~applications.~~ In the case of slag, the release of PO_4^{3-} will likely be another driver that affects plankton productivity and
589 community composition. As for $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$, however, the effect of additional PO_4^{3-} did likely not materialise in this
590 experiment because PO_4^{3-} was not limiting over the course of the study. However, in ecosystems where PO_4^{3-} is a limiting
591 resource, the application of slag could enhance productivity with associated benefits for higher trophic levels. In contrast,
592 excessive applications of slag and concomitant PO_4^{3-} release could also pose a risk of eutrophication. Future studies may
593 need to investigate what the most sustainable dose of OAE via olivine and/or slag applications could be and the suitable
594 regions for application.

595
596 The flow cytometry results further revealed the change in phytoplankton community composition. Both the olivine and
597 slag treatments sustained higher microphytoplankton abundances after the peak of the phytoplankton bloom. This trend is
598 consistent with higher F_v/F_m values in the treatments than in the control so that it is tempting to assume that
599 photophysiological fitness gain measured with the FRRf led to higher competitiveness of microphytoplankton in the
600 community. Indeed, calculations of the contribution of different phytoplankton groups to total biovolume based on flow
601 cytometry indicate that microphytoplankton were predominantly contributing to the phytoplankton community biovolume
602 so that the responses measured by the FRRf were probably to a large extent driven by this group.

603
604 Apart from the increased microphytoplankton abundance, for the slag treatment, other phytoplankton groups distinguished
605 with flow cytometry did not deviate considerably from the control. The olivine addition, however, triggered more
606 pronounced shifts in the phytoplankton community. In particular, the nanoeukaryotes (roughly between 2-20 μm),
607 picoeukaryotes and the cryptophytes showed relatively higher abundance during the peak of the phytoplankton bloom, and
608 the abundance of cyanobacteria was higher after the bloom. We speculate that this shift following olivine treatment may
609 be attributable to a top-down effect from the decrease in zooplankton grazing effects in microcosms, which will be
610 discussed in section 4.2.2.

611
612 The measurement of photophysiological parameters revealed that the phytoplankton had generally better photosynthetic
613 performance in the slag and olivine treatments than in the control, especially after the phytoplankton bloom. During the

614 first 5 days, the changes in phytoplankton photosynthetic performance were indistinguishable between the control and the
615 slag treatment, while the values of α , ETR_{max} and F_v/F_m were lower in olivine treatment. At this time all microcosms had
616 similar health because of the relatively high NO_x^- concentrations and Fe supply (around 500 nmol L^{-1}), but the suspended
617 particles in the olivine treatment may have led to artifacts in the measuring of photophysiology by FRRf. Scattering and/or
618 absorption of light by suspended olivine particles is the most parsimonious explanation for the simultaneous depression in
619 α , ETR_{max} and F_v/F_m . After day 5, the F_v/F_m , α and ETR_{max} values decreased significantly faster in the control than in the
620 treatments, and to values lower than the initial condition. A decrease of F_v/F_m is commonly associated with physiological
621 stress, such as nutrient limitation, and high light stress (Bhagooli, et al., 2021), with Fe limitation causing a more
622 pronounced decline in F_v/F_m than nitrogen limitation (Gorbunov, et al., 2021). The ETR_{max} , which represents the maximum
623 electron transport rate, has also been shown to be negatively affected when phytoplankton experience nitrogen or Fe
624 limitation (Kolber et al., 1994; Gorbunov & Falkowski 2021). Furthermore, the change in photosynthesis performance
625 after day 10 was suspected to be driven by the microphytoplankton because the decrease of F_v/F_m , α , and ETR_{max} in the
626 control was coupled with the decrease in microphytoplankton abundance while the other phytoplankton groups were in
627 low abundance as in the mineral addition treatments, and the microphytoplankton contributed significantly (75 %) to
628 community biovolume. All microcosms were similarly NO_x^- limited from day 5 onward (Fig. 3) so that N-limitation is
629 unlikely to explain different trends in photophysiological parameters between the control and OAE treatments. Trace metals,
630 especially Fe, released through slag and olivine additions could potentially explain these differences.

631
632 Several of the trace metals released from slag and olivine are required for photosynthesis. For example, Fe is required for
633 many proteins functioning in photosynthesis, such as cytochromes, ferredoxin, and superoxide dismutase (SOD) (Twining
634 and Baines, 2013), and the addition of Fe can stimulate the growth of phytoplankton (Sunda and Huntsman, 1997) and
635 increase F_v/F_m (Behrenfeld et al., 2006). The dissolved and particulate Fe concentrations were higher in mineral addition
636 treatments than in the control indicating potentially more Fe available to sustain phytoplankton photosynthesis. While this
637 explanation is intriguing for the observed trends in photophysiology, it remains unclear why such strong differences
638 occurred between mineral addition and control treatments despite dissolved Fe concentrations of $\sim 500 \text{ nmol L}^{-1}$ at the end
639 of the experiment in the control. In Fe-limited ocean regions, dissolved Fe is at least two orders of magnitude lower, and
640 the enhancement of Fe to $\sim 1.5 \text{ nmol L}^{-1}$ can induce major phytoplankton blooms and relieve photophysiological stress (De
641 Baar et al., 2005). It is possible that these coastal phytoplankton species have higher Fe requirements than those from the
642 open ocean where Fe is limiting (Strzepek and Harrison, 2004). ~~We speculate that when Fe was consumed during the~~
643 ~~phytoplankton bloom, bioavailable Fe was much lower in the control, and may have been insufficient to meet the cellular~~
644 ~~requirements of coastal phytoplankton.~~ Our findings ~~therefore~~ suggest that Fe perturbations ~~mayis~~ not only ~~be~~ relevant for
645 ~~lower~~ Fe open ocean regions but could also be relevant for coastal ocean locations.

646
647 Alternatively, the addition of Mn, Ni and other trace metals from mineral addition may have benefited photosynthesis.
648 Manganese is required for the water-splitting reaction of photosystem II (Armstrong, 2008), and both Mn and Ni are
649 common bioactive trace metals for SODs in marine phytoplankton. The noxious superoxide anion radical (O_2^-) generated
650 from aerobic respiration and oxygenic photosynthesis could be harmful to phytoplankton physiology, and SOD removes
651 O_2^- , thus improving photosynthesis (Wafar et al., 1995; Wolfe-Simon et al., 2005). This is consistent with our
652 photosynthetic measurements. Interestingly, although the amounts and types of trace metals released from the slag and
653 olivine powders were different, they led to relatively similar F_v/F_m values with only slightly higher F_v/F_m in the olivine

654 than the slag treatment from days 10-21. Over this time, these trace metal additions could have fertilized different
655 phytoplankton species (Pausch et al., 2019; Balaguer et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2022) possibly because different
656 phytoplankton could have different trace metal requirements, such as for SOD. For example, cyanobacteria have NiSOD,
657 diatoms have MnSOD, dinoflagellates have both FeSOD and MnSOD (Wolfe-Simon et al., 2005). Another explanation is
658 that phytoplankton in the control were limited by bicarbonate while the treatments had sufficient bicarbonate from added
659 minerals. However, we were unable to determine the species-level changes in the phytoplankton community, and hence
660 whether these trace metals, individually or combined, could account for the observed phytoplankton community
661 photosynthetic performance.

662

663 4.2.2. OAE impacts on the zooplankton community

664 Slag-based OAE did not significantly influence the zooplankton community composition while olivine-based OAE induced
665 some statistically significant effects, including a lower Shannon diversity. The increase in *N. scintillans* abundance and the
666 decrease in *Penilia* sp. and *Oikopleura* sp. in the olivine treatment indicate that the zooplankton response to OAE can vary
667 among different zooplankton types.

668

669 The observed lower abundance of *Oikopleura* sp. on day 13 in the olivine treatment may indicate a temporary suppression
670 or a slower growth rate of this zooplankton species in response to the olivine addition. This could be attributed to the
671 potential effects of olivine on the availability of essential nutrients or changes in the physicochemical environment of the
672 water. However, the subsequent increase in *Oikopleura* sp. abundance by day 22 suggests that the growth of this species
673 may have recovered or accelerated in the olivine treatment, leading to a higher abundance compared to the slag treatment
674 and the control on day 22. As discussed in section 4.2.1, reduced *Oikopleura* sp. abundance was unlikely due to reduced
675 food availability since phytoplankton within the preferred edible size spectrum, such as cyanobacteria and nanoeukaryotes,
676 were even more abundant in the olivine treatment. Instead, we hypothesize it to be an effect of the suspended olivine
677 particles that occurred for approximately the first 5 days of the study that were so plentiful that they turned the enclosed
678 seawater milky and may have clogged the mucous feeding mesh of *Oikopleura* sp. (Lombard et al., 2011).

679

680 The abundance of *Penilia* sp. and *Oikopleura* sp. was lower in the olivine treatment than the other two groups throughout
681 the experiment while the abundance of *N. scintillans* was consistently higher. The second bloom of cyanobacteria in olivine
682 is ~~likely-potentially to be~~ the results of decreased predators, like *Penilia* sp. and *Oikopleura* sp., ~~although the changes in~~
683 ~~their abundance were not statistically significant between treatments and the control~~. We cannot provide a particularly
684 convincing hypothesis about what specifically drove these ~~differences in these zooplankton species~~, although it is tempting
685 to speculate that suspended particles present ~~in the olivine treatment~~ at the beginning may have played a role also for those
686 organisms since this was the only apparent systematic difference to the control and slag treatment. The proliferation of *N.*
687 *scintillans* can be problematic since heterotrophic dinoflagellate blooms can regulate phytoplankton communities, cause
688 toxicity to aquatic fish, and create a hypoxic sub-surface zone (Baliarsingh et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2020; Al-Azri et al.,
689 2007), although a bloom of *N. scintillans* in southeast Australia only induced ichthyotoxicity when the cell concentration
690 reached 2,000,000 cells L⁻¹ (Hallegraeff et al., 2019). For comparison, we observed a maximum of 32 cells L⁻¹ in one
691 microcosm replicate of the olivine treatment.

692

693 In comparison to olivine, steel slag seemed to have less potential to affect zooplankton community composition. The
694 abundance of all groups of phytoplankton, apart from microphytoplankton after day 10, was similar in the slag treatment
695 and the control through the experiment. This is probably because the amount of slag powder added in the treatment was
696 much less than the olivine powder resulting in fewer physical particle perturbations to zooplankton. In addition, the
697 chemistry perturbations such as enhanced alkalinity concentration and various dissolved trace metals, especially Mn, from
698 the slag powder did not seem to have a notable direct influence on zooplankton abundance over the three-week period.
699 Even though we did not observe drastic changes in zooplankton abundance during the experiment, considering there was
700 higher microphytoplankton abundance in the slag treatment after day 10, slag powder may benefit some zooplankton
701 especially those who feed on large phytoplankton on a longer time scale.
702

703 **4.2.3. Dissolved trace metal accumulation in seawater and its environmental implications**

704 The addition of olivine and slag as OAE source minerals released trace metals into the seawater, predominantly Al, Fe, Ni,
705 and Cu (olivine) as well as Al, Fe, and Mn (slag). The maximum measured concentrations for dissolved Al, Fe, Ni, Cu, and
706 Mn were 1093, 253, 77, 27, and 810 nmol L⁻¹, respectively. The threshold values for drinking water with health or aesthetic
707 considerations by the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for Al, Fe, Ni, Cu, and Mn are 7400, 5360, 340, 15600, and
708 1800 nmol L⁻¹, respectively (NRMMC, 2022). All dissolved trace metal concentrations measured herein are well below
709 these health and aesthetic threshold values. In natural freshwater sources, the concentrations of Al, Fe, Ni, Cu and Mn are
710 generally less than 44000, 71400, 510, 156, and 25400 nmol L⁻¹ (NRMMC, 2022). Although these natural water data were
711 primarily derived from rivers and streams, they serve as valuable references for evaluating trace metal release in our
712 experiment. Thus, mineral additions to the microcosms as simulated here did not increase thresholds for any of the
713 measured trace metals beyond those that are considered safe for drinking water quality, and they were within the trace
714 metal concentration range in natural water. However, while these guidelines on drinking water provide a good starting point
715 on how to quantify what OAE perturbation could be considered “safe” and “unsafe” with regards to trace metals, it must
716 be recognized that seawater is not drinking water and that critical thresholds may be different in the latter.
717

718 The release of trace metals from OAE materials is considered to have relatively strong effects on biology, particularly in
719 the open ocean where trace metals usually occur in lower concentrations. For example, oceanic Al, Fe, Ni, and Mn
720 concentrations are about 2, 0.5, 8, and 0.3 nmol L⁻¹ (Bruland and Lohan, 2003; Sohrin and Bruland, 2011). Previous
721 research on OAE-associated trace metal impacts on individual phytoplankton species grown in laboratory environments
722 has shown that concentration thresholds beyond which trace metal induces negative effects on fitness likely differ between
723 species (Guo et al., 2022; Hutchins et al., 2023; Xin et al., 2023). Indeed, our experiment with plankton communities
724 provides further support that several components of the planktonic food web are affected by OAE. However, our experiment
725 does not allow determining whether observed effects were primarily invoked by carbonate chemistry, macronutrient (P and
726 Si), or trace metal perturbations. Thus, dedicated experiments isolating the impact of these factors on plankton will be
727 required in the future.

728 **4.2.4. Particulate trace metal accumulation in seawater and its environmental implications**

729 The Derwent Estuary (where we collected our plankton communities) was highly metal polluted due to industrial practice
730 (Macleod and Coughanowr, 2019). Both our dissolved and particulate trace metal data indicated high background metal

731 concentrations, especially for Fe and Zn. Furthermore, the metal:POC ratios found here are higher than reported for open
732 ocean studies or lab cultures. For example, the Fe:POC can vary from 2-136 $\mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$ depending on the cultured
733 phytoplankton species and the environmental dissolved Fe concentration (Kulkarni et al., 2006; Sunda and Huntsman,
734 1995; King et al., 2012; Boyd et al., 2015). In our results the Fe:POC values ranged from 1200 to 39 000 $\mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$, which
735 may be due to the particulate trace metal richness of the Derwent Estuary (control) and/or the addition of lithogenic particles
736 (slag and olivine treatment). The presence of abiotic particulate metal sources creates challenges to quantify metal quotas
737 and then to evaluate metal accumulation effects on biological organisms.

738

739 Our study reveals that the added minerals enriched the particulate trace metal pools to various degrees. Consistent with the
740 dissolved trace metal data, the slag treatment was enriched with particulate Fe and Mn while the olivine treatment was
741 enriched with particulate Fe and Ni. The enhanced particulate Ni and Mn concentrations were higher than before mineral
742 additions and the control levels. This is in line with previous research which indicates a positive correlation between
743 particulate and dissolved trace metal concentrations (Gaulier et al., 2019).

744

745 Based on the amounts released through OAE as simulated herein, it appears that Ni and Mn have the highest potential to
746 cause toxicity in certain marine organisms (Jakimska et al., 2011). These trace metals have the potential to accumulate in
747 marine organisms over time (bioaccumulation effects), and their increased concentrations in the food chain can lead to
748 adverse effects on the health and well-being of organisms at higher trophic levels (biomagnification effects). One crucial
749 next step will be to investigate whether the enhanced dissolved/particulate trace metal will affect higher trophic levels to
750 estimate the environmental risks of OAE on other marine organisms.

751

752 **5 Conclusions**

753 Our study aimed to assess the environmental impacts of two ground OAE minerals, olivine and steel slag, on coastal
754 plankton communities. Both minerals released alkalinity, leading to an elevation in pH_T. However, the addition of steel
755 slag exhibited significantly higher efficiency in elevating alkalinity compared to olivine.

756

757 Approximately 1.9 g L⁻¹ of olivine powder were added in the olivine treatments, leading to a 29 $\mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ increase in
758 alkalinity and increased concentrations of Si(OH)₄ and trace metals (Fe and Ni). Compared to this relatively modest
759 increase of alkalinity and associated CO₂ removal potential, the impacts on the plankton community appeared to be
760 relatively pronounced. Thus, although our experiment ran for only 3 weeks, and olivine powder may slowly release more
761 alkalinity, the short-term response monitored here suggests that the immediate climatic benefit is relatively small compared
762 to a relatively pronounced environmental effect.

763

764 Only 0.038 g L⁻¹ of slag were added to the treatment but this led to an alkalinity enhancement of 361 $\mu\text{mol kg}^{-1}$ and the
765 increased concentrations of macronutrients (P and Si) and trace metals (Mn and Fe) additions as well as changes in
766 carbonate chemistry. Although limited environmental impacts were observed from the slag treatment in our experiment,
767 some aspects require further study. For example, the pronounced release of P could cause eutrophication and the relatively
768 rapid increase in pH may be a detrimental aspect if organisms cannot acclimate fast enough. Furthermore, it is essential to

769 consider that the composition of steel slag can vary depending on the source factory (Wang et al., 2011; Proctor et al.,
770 2000), which may affect the efficiency of carbon removal and change the trace metal perturbation. Nevertheless, just based
771 on our experiment, the comparison between the immediate climatic benefit and environmental effect appears to be more
772 favourable for slag than olivine.

773

774 Based on our findings, it can be concluded that steel slag powder exhibited fewer environmental impacts on plankton
775 communities compared to olivine powder relative to its capacity for alkalinity enhancement. The results highlight the
776 importance of carefully assessing the environmental consequences of using specific OAE minerals, particularly when
777 considering their potential effects on plankton communities.

778

779 **Data availability.** Data are available in the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) data catalogue, University
780 of Tasmania (UTAS) (<https://doi.org/10.25959/X6FH-9K15>, Guo, J., & Bach, L. (2023)).

781

782 **Author contributions.** LTB, RFS, KMS and JAG designed the experiments and JAG carried them out. LTB, RFS and
783 KMS supervised the study. ATT analysed the dissolved/particulate trace metal samples. JAG conducted statistical analyses.
784 JAG prepared the manuscript with contributions from all authors.

785

786 **Competing interests.** The contact author has declared that none of the authors has any competing interests.

787

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