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Production and Recycling of Organic Matter in Marine Biofilms Formed on Old and New Plastics

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Abstract

New plastics, such as surgical masks, nitrile gloves, and compostable plastics, have been produced in response to the recent pandemic and in accordance with international regulations. These new plastics, along with other common plastics, have significantly increased their input into the marine environment. Biofilm accretion was studied in the laboratory because floating plastic provides a suitable surface for the settlement of microorganisms. Under natural and artificial conditions, some of which resembled anthropogenic-affected states (eutrophication) and others of environmental variability (darkness and oligotrophy), the biofilm's organic matter production and recycling characteristics were evaluated. Due to their structure and composition, the various plastics hosted distinct biofilms in natural conditions. On compostable plastic and surgical mask, biofilm was found to be thicker, with organic carbon maxima of 4.3 0.8 g cm^2 and 35.0 4.7 g cm^2, respectively. Compared to polyethylene terephthalate, polystyrene, and nitrile, compostable plastic contained more carbohydrates (on average, 8.0 0.8 g cm^2) than the other materials.

Keywords: Biofilm; Plastics; Recycle

Introduction

Biofilms are formed when submerged solid surfaces are colonized by microorganisms under natural conditions that produce complex structures marked by high cell proliferation and the exudation of extracellular polymeric substances. The mineralization and circulation of nutrients are aided by biofilms, which play a significant role in the biogeochemical processes of aquatic environments due to the fact that their structure and complexity provide protection for the microorganisms that are embedded in the organic matrix, encourage mutually beneficial relationships, and promote robust biological production. The biofilm micro-community's heterotrophic bacteria, photoautotrophic prokaryotes and eukaryotes, heterotrophic protistans, and fungi are the most extensively studied organisms. Additionally, metazoans (larvae and adults) and macroalgae can settle in a well-organized community, hence expanding the aspects and intricacy of the organic and natural cycles on the surfaces [1].

Variables in the seawater of various systems' trends

The surface colonization and the accumulation of biofilm are controlled by a few elements, including temperature, light Latva and other, Hydrodynamic force, salinity, and a pH drop at a level that is still poorly understood as a result of rising CO2 levels. The availability of both organic and inorganic nutrients and the kind of substrate also influence the formation of biofilms [2].

Biofilms accumulate on both natural and artificial substrates, and in recent years, the use of plastic debris as a favorable substrate has sparked a lot of interest. Following the introduction of plastic into the water, the processes are immediately active at the microscopic scale, and bacterial colonization begins within the first few hours. Complex microbial communities whose biological components have their origin in plankton but can change to a different lifestyle adapted to the synthetic substrate are primed for development by the accumulation of bacterial biofilm. As a result, biofilms on natural substrates and the microbial communities found on plastic debris generally differ [3].

In turn, the plastics' morphology, buoyancy, residence times, and distribution may be altered as a result of their interaction with ecosystem biological components. For instance, the biofilm coats plastic debris, making it appealing to small organisms for consumption. 2011; Large organisms (fish, reptiles, mammals, and birds; Foekema and other, 2013; Fossi and other, 2012; Savoca and other, 2017; Rios-Fuster and others, 2019; Castro-Jiménez and others, 2019). As a result, the accumulation of biofilm can have various effects on the diffusion of plastic in the oceans.

Along with common items made of polystyrene, polyethylene terephthalate, polypropylene, and high- and low-density polyethylene, numerous new plastic items have recently entered the sea. Several uses of biodegradable/compostable plastics have been mandated by recent legislation and the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant influx of surgical masks and gloves into the natural environment. In addition to their peculiar morphology, these new synthetic materials pose a new threat to ecosystem integrity that must be fully comprehended in all its facets and appropriately addressed [4, 5].

In this study, we focused on the beginning stages of biofilm accumulation on various plastics: polystyrene for packaging, polyethylene terephthalate for drinkable water bottles, biodegradable and compostable plastic for food packaging bags, nitrile rubber for disposable gloves, and polypropylene for surgical masks. These materials were hatched in seawater in exploratory miniature frameworks. To highlight bacterial activity under oligotrophic conditions (by removing large cells and particles) and to mimic the conditions found in the aphotic zone (by removing light energy) and during eutrophication (by introducing inorganic nutrients and dissolved organic carbon), the systems were either maintained in conditions that were similar to those found in nature or subjected to environmental modifications [6,7].

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Discussion

The examinations performed on the water gathered for the two trials and put in the exploratory frameworks showed starting lower focuses for the first test than for the second in quite a while of particulate OC (133.7 ± 3.1 versus 276.7 ± 25.8 μg l–1), particulate Nit (13.6 ± 1.6 versus 33.4 ± 2.8 μg l–1) and chlorophyll-a (0.11 ± 0.01 versus 0.94 ± 0.33 μg l–1) [8].

Conclusion

Biofilm covered every kind of plastic, demonstrating that synthetic substrates can easily enter the natural ecological channels. Nevertheless, the biofilms that were present in various plastics varied according to the plastics' structural and compositional characteristics and the shifting environmental conditions. While some plastics permitted the accumulation of thicker biofilms primarily populated by heterotrophic organisms, others favored the settlement and development of photoautotrophic organisms [9, 10].

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they are not aware of any personal relationships or competing financial interests that might have appeared to have influenced the work reported in this paper**.**

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