

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SIMULATED SUBMARINE  
GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE ON THE HAWAIIAN ENDEMIC  
EDIBLE ALGA *GRACILARIA CORONOPIFOLIA*

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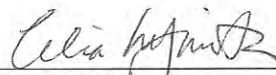
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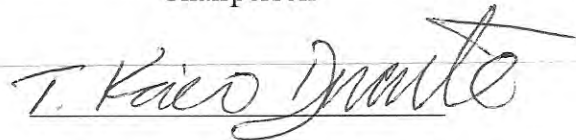
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## **ABSTRACT**

Submarine groundwater discharge (SGD) is a significant source of nutrients to many coastal environments. The difficulty of experimental manipulation *in situ* has resulted in little evidence for a causal relationship between SGD and coastal biological processes. In this study, we examine the physiological response of the endemic edible Hawaiian rhodophyte, *Gracilaria coronopifolia*, to varied levels of simulated SGD. Forty-eight thalli were grown in a unidirectional flow-through mesocosm at 25°C and 250  $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$  PAR during two replicate trials. The 27‰ SGD treatment (26.6 $\mu\text{M-N}$ , 1.1  $\mu\text{M-P}$ , 27‰ salinity) provided optimal conditions for growth of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* and had higher mean values for all parameters measured. Regression relationships indicate simulated SGD levels predict growth rate, apical tip development, and photosynthetic parameters ( $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$  and  $E_k$ ). Our results indicate moderate levels of SGD input may increase the growth rate, apical tip development, and photosynthetic performance of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* on otherwise oligotrophic Hawaiian reefs.

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# **Chapter 1:**

## **Review of Literature**

### **Primary Productivity and Marine Algae:**

Global net primary production is defined as the amount of carbon fixed through photosynthesis, which is available to heterotrophic organisms in terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The once held paradigm that the majority of the world's oceans are essentially deserts is no longer accepted, as high photosynthetic and turn-over rates have clarified ample productivity (Sheldon and Sutcliffe 1978; Eppley 1980; Jenkins 1982; Laws et al. 1984; Laws et al. 1987). Photosynthetic marine organisms are responsible for 48 % of global net primary productivity (Field et al. 1998) and produce between 30-60 Pg of organic carbon each year (Martin et al. 1987; Charpy-Roubaud and Sournia 1990; Smith and Hollibaugh 1993; Carr et al. 2006). Ninety percent of marine net primary productivity arises from phytoplankton metabolism over 70 % of earth's surface. Benthic algae are responsible for the remaining 10 % of the world's marine primary production, sustaining shallow coastal communities that represent 1 % of Earth's surface area (Charpy and Charpy-Roubaud 1990).

In order to fix roughly half of the annual global carbon, marine photosynthetic organisms must have an adequate supply of nutrients. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and carbon are the most important macronutrients as predicted by plant physiology. Nitrogen is generally considered to be the primary limiting nutrient in marine environments although studies have shown phosphorus to be limiting for certain species or locations. Tropical

waters are usually considered to be oligotrophic (nutrient limited) with nutrient levels near the limits of chemical detection. In some tropical ecosystems, there appears a sharp contradiction between high amounts benthic primary production and extremely low levels of dissolved nutrients in the overlying water column (Lewis 1977; Marsh 1977; D'Elia et al. 1981; Laws et al. 1984). Net macroalgal productivity in some oligotrophic waters is comparable to areas of high nutrient flux from coastal upwelling of deep nutrient-rich water; standing stocks may reach 1000g dry mass m<sup>-2</sup> (Valiela 1995; Stimson et al. 1996). On some reef slopes, high macroalgal productivity is sustained despite low nutrient concentrations (Lapointe et al. 1993; Stimson et al. 1996).

Historically, it has been assumed that the water column is the primary source of macroalgal nutrients and thus, the majority of measurements have only considered the water column overlying the benthos (Hanisak 1983). In order to maintain high biomass in a coral reef, macroalgae must acquire sufficient nutrients to offset losses to herbivory, reproduction, and detritus formation. A plausible explanation for the discrepancy of high productivity in otherwise oligotrophic waters is that measurements of water column nutrients are not indicative of actual concentrations available to the benthos. Larned (1997) found that six out of nine species of macroalgae could not sustain positive growth when cultured in seawater from the Kaneohe Bay water column. This research suggests that there must be other sources of nutrients available to the benthos. After uptake by phytobenthos and rapid mixing, these nutrients likely become nearly undetectable in the water column.

Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain this contradiction of high rates of algal production in oligotrophic waters. Many studies have shown that the growth rate of

marine algae is a function of water velocity, which influences the flux of nutrients to plant surfaces (Friedlander and Levy 1995; Gonen et al. 1995; Larned 1997; Ryder et al. 2004). Even at low concentrations of nutrients, sufficient water velocity can increase rates of nutrient uptake by thinning external boundary layers of an alga. Periodic pulsing of nutrients into the water column may also account for sustained algal growth (Lapointe 1985; Navarro-Angulo and Robledo 1999). Marine algae are capable of storing nutrients in excess of growth requirements for later use in the form of pigments and metabolic compounds (Ryther et al. 1981; Bird et al. 1982; Liu and Dong 2001). Nutrient efflux and remineralized organic matter from the sediment has also been proposed as a source of benthic nutrients (Hansen et al. 1987; Capone et al. 1992; Boucher et al. 1994).

The role of invertebrates as a nutrient source has been suggested for tropical phytobenthos (Hansen et al. 1987). Turf algae and seagrasses have been shown to benefit from nutrients provided by macrofaunal excretions (Williams and Carpenter 1988; Powell et al. 1989). Larned (1997) concludes that epifaunal invertebrates release about twice as much nitrogen and half as much phosphate as sediment efflux per unit area of *Dictyosphaeria cavernosa* thalli per day. Some species of tropical macroalgae capable of forming mat morphologies are able to trap benthic nutrients and under their canopy. Dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) concentrations beneath mats of *Dictyosphaeria cavernosa*, *Gracilaria salicornia*, and *Kappaphycus alvarezii* have been measured at concentrations five-fold greater than the overlying water column (Larned, 1997).

## **Submarine Groundwater Discharge: A Historical Perspective:**

The in-flux of submarine groundwater discharge (SGD) is now recognized as an important pathway for nutrients to reach the marine ecosystems (Johannes 1980; Hatcher 1990; Burnett et al. 2003; Paytan et al. 2006). SGD is defined as any and all flow of water on continental margins from the seabed to the coastal ocean, regardless of fluid composition or driving force (Burnett et al. 2003). This process can occur wherever there is an aquifer, with a head level above sea level, hydraulically connected to permeable marine sediments. One component of SGD is meteoric water that precipitated on land, percolated to the water table, and is forced from marine sediments by terrestrial hydraulic gradients or gravitational convection. A second major component of SGD consists of recirculated seawater driven across the ocean-sediment interface by a combination of terrestrial and marine hydraulic forces such as convection, geothermal convection, tidal pumping, and wave set up (McCoy and Corbett 2009).

While recent research has begun to focus on characterizing, differentiating (terrestrial versus recirculated), and quantifying sources of SGD to the coastal ocean (Wilson 2005; Martin et al. 2006; Martin et al. 2007; McCoy et al. 2007; Thompson et al. 2007; Cable and Martin 2008), it remains clear that SGD, and specifically the meteoric or fresh water component of SGD, has significant implications for coastal management strategies worldwide. Groundwater nutrient concentrations are typically high relative to seawater and even small groundwater fluxes may make large contributions to coastal nutrient budgets (Li et al. 1999). This is of particular importance in oligotrophic areas such as coral reefs with few other external nutrient sources (Hamner and Wolanski 1988;

Shellenbarger et al. 2006).

Knowledge of SGD and its basic driving forces are not limited to contemporary science of the last century. The first submarine springs were reported by Greek, Roman, and Persian writers (Potie and Tardieu 1977). Strabo, a Roman geographer who lived from 63 B.C. to 21 A.D., wrote of a submarine spring 2.5 miles offshore from Syria in the Mediterranean. Water was collected from this fresh spring via boat using a lead funnel and leather tube for use consumption on land (Kohout 1966). While submarine springs have been found in coastal waters of the United States, Cuba, Mexico, Chile, Jamaica, Australia, and Japan, the most reports have been from the Mediterranean basin: Libya, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Greece, France, Spain, Italy, and Yugoslavia (Bonem 1988). The occurrence of submarine freshwater springs has long been known via Hawaiian legends. Today, these legends have been validated as sites with cool and or fresh water emanating from the sea floor (known in Hawai'i as "water holes" or lua wai) have been found on the Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i and in Waikiki (which means "spouting-water" in Hawaiian) on the island of Oahu (Grossman et al. 2008).

As for modern scientific investigation, research concerning terrestrial groundwater and the marine environment from 1925 to 1980 had four important conclusions: (1) SGD was a widespread phenomenon, (2) nitrate concentrations were typically two to three orders of magnitude greater in SGD than overlying ocean water, (3) the salinity of sediment pore water was related to benthic composition and (4) discharge decreased with increasing distance from shore (Johannes 1980). In the 1980 benchmark review paper, Johannes states that the collective knowledge of SGD, though scattered and fragmentary, suggests that SGD deserves more attention than it has received from marine ecologists.

This conclusion was largely based on previous studies, the observation that SGD is a potential source of both nutrients and pollutants from the terrestrial environment, and that human activities on land could ultimately influence coastal marine ecosystems. At this time, few studies had attempted to link reduced salinity of marine sediments pore waters to the composition the benthic environment (Johannes 1980). Porewater salinity was found to be related to the composition of marine microphytes (Bruce 1925; Smith 1955; Moore 1979), of overlying algal mats (Sanders 1979), and seagrass beds and associated fauna (Kohout and Kolipinski 1967). Commercial fish and lobster yields have also been positively correlated with the rate of discharge of land-based nutrients (Sutcliffe 1972).

Heeding Johannes's call to action, oceanographers, geochemists, and marine ecologists set out to locate and quantify SGD and its interaction with coastal environments. In Discovery Bay, Jamaica, a highly significant negative relationship between nitrate and salinity, with nitrate concentrations typically near 80  $\mu\text{M}$ , was found for SGD (D'Elia et al. 1981). In Great South Bay, New York, nitrate and salinity in sediment cores were negatively correlated and both variables were related to the amount of rainfall (Capone and Bautista 1985). The first direct *in situ* measurements of ground water flux on a coral reef was reported from Barbados, West Indies. Using Lee style, seepage meters (Lee 1977), Lewis (1987) found a strong inverse relationship with salinity and nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_2 + \text{NO}_3$ ). SGD was found to decrease with water depth and was influenced by tidal and seasonal factors in Barbados (Lewis 1987). In 1989, Lapointe and O'Connell reported that the productivity of *Cladophora* mats may be enhanced by nutrient rich groundwater discharge in Harrington Sound, Bermuda. Porewaters under the algal mats had reduced salinities, elevated ammonium, and high N:P ratios (Lapointe

and O'Connell 1989). In Cape Cod, MA, Giblin and Gaines observed a negative relationship between salinity and nitrate in sandy sediments (Giblin and Gaines 1990).

More than two decades after Johannes 1980 paper, studies linking terrestrial groundwater and the coastal environment generally concluded that SGD is likely a significant source of nutrients (particularly nitrate) to coastal environments and that anthropogenic activities (such as sewage disposal and agriculture) could potentially be significant factors in eutrophication and / or increased algal biomass (Lapointe 1997; Paerl 1997). Although comparisons of well-water nutrients to SGD and relationships of salinity to nutrient gradients of porewaters may indicate groundwater discharge from the sediment, researchers still needed more convincing measures to couple terrestrial processes with the sediment-ocean interface.

In 1996, Cable and Burnett published a study that addressed this issue. They conclude that the isotope  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  is useful natural tracer of groundwater discharge to the coastal zone because:  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  is chemically conservative, easily measured, is three to four orders of magnitude more concentrated in groundwater than seawater, and decays at a rate comparable to many coastal processes. In 2002, Moore et al. reported that nutrients were highly correlated with radium concentration in SGD 20km of the North Carolina coast. Currently, a variety of radium and radon tracers are used to estimate SGD and nutrient flux in coastal waters (Beck et al. ; Burnett et al. 2008). Using a combination of  $^{222}\text{Ra}$  and Lee-style seepage meters, SGD flux in Kahana Bay, Oahu was found to be comparable to average annual surface runoff from Kahana River. Total dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus was estimated to be 200% and 500% greater than fluxes via surface runoff (Garrison et al. 2003). Hwang et al. (2005) reported radium and nutrient



concentrations in brackish groundwater to be an order of magnitude higher than stream water or the ambient water of Yeolja Bay, Korea. Although SGD is known to vary greatly on scales of space and time, many studies suggest that SGD flux may rival rivers and the atmosphere as a source of nutrients to coastal environments (Paerl 1997; Krest et al. 2000; Moore et al. 2002).

As radon tracers emerged as a method of SGD quantification, a similar method employing isotopes tracers began to gain popularity among researchers looking to link water column nutrients to anthropogenic sources. The ratio of  $^{14}\text{N}:$  $^{15}\text{N}$  is now widely used to indicate anthropogenic sources of nutrients in plant tissues, sediments, and the water column. Using  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  and water sampling methods, Smith et al. (2005) concluded that SGD is factor in occurrence of large-scale ephemeral blooms of the marine alga *Cladophora sericea* on coral reefs in Maui. The porewaters of sediments contained high concentrations of nutrients and low salinity relative to the overlying ambient water column. Tissue samples revealed elevated nitrogen and  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  suggesting that terrestrial based nutrients via SGD are likely to play an important role in the development of algal blooms (Smith et al. 2005). A similar study by Lapointe concluded that increased DIN and decreased salinity indicate SGD may play a role in macroalgal blooms on coral reefs in both Florida and Jamaica. Elevated  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  ratio values indicated wastewater as a contributing source of nitrogen to the blooms in Florida (Lapointe 1997). Tissue nutrient samples of the seagrass *Thalassia testudinum* from before and after heavy rains suggest submarine springs may influence nutrient processes within seagrass meadows near the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico. Elevated  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  in the seagrass tissues suggests wastewater as a nitrogen source (Carruthers et al. 2005). Herrera-Silveira conclude that SGD has

played a major role in the shift from seagrass (*T. testudinum*) dominated cover to green filamentous algae and strongly influences primary production as well as trophic status at sites near the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico (Herrera-Silveira 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 2002; Herrera-Silveira and Morales-Ojeda 2009).

Remote sensing has recently emerged as a valuable method of detection and quantification of SGD. Using low altitude thermal infrared imagery (TIR) and simultaneous water column sampling, Johnson et al. (2008) identified >50 point-sourced nutrient-rich SGD plumes on the Kona coast of the Big Island, Hawai'i. In tropical regions where groundwater is typically cooler than the coastal ocean, temperature can become an important marker for SGD. Water column profiling along a SGD plume in Honokohau Harbor and Kealakekua Bay (Hawai'i) has provided detailed information about the mixing dynamics of SGD. These surface plumes consisted of a distinct gradient of high nutrient, cool, buoyant, brackish water less than a few meters thick flowing seaward. Highly significant negative linear relationships were found between salinity and nitrate, phosphate, and silica. Temperature was also positively related with salinity (Johnson et al. 2008). Groundwater resources in this region of Hawai'i is thought to be of particular importance to reef productivity because there is little terrestrial surface water input. SGD is known to be the only significant source of freshwater to this coastal ecosystem (Kay et al. 1977; Oki and Dimeyer 1999).

## **Nutrient Limitation in the Marine Environment:**

In the past two decades, there has been a growing concern among coastal managers as benthic communities in many tropical regions show signs of change. Shifts from coral to algal dominance have prompted many scientists to identify the factors controlling productivity on coastal reefs. SGD has been suggested to play an integral role in coastal eutrophication and reef degradation where natural groundwater nutrient concentrations are enhanced by anthropogenic sources, such as sewage or agricultural practices (D'Elia et al. 1981; Lapointe and O'Connell 1989; Valiela et al. 1990; Lapointe 1997; Herrera-Silveira 1998; González et al. 2008).

The rate of growth is generally regulated by the availability of the scarcest nutrient relative to the requirements of an alga. If the concentration of this limiting nutrient increases until there is excess relative to requirements, a different nutrient may then become relatively scarce and will thus become the growth-limiting nutrient. This relationship, known as “Liebig’s law of the minimum” (Liebig 1840; Odum 1971), has become a founding theory for investigations into ecosystem ecology and plant physiology. The identity of the limiting nutrient may vary among species, locations, and seasons; thus broad generalizations may be unwarranted (Lapointe 1987; Lapointe et al. 1987; Larned 1998; Tsai et al. 2005).

### **Nitrogen:**

Nitrogen is a crucial element in the composition of the most important structural and functional macromolecules in organisms. On average, nitrogen makes up 15% of

proteins and 13% of nucleic acids (Inokuchi et al. 2002). In marine systems, nitrogen exists in many inorganic and organic forms. Dissolved forms of inorganic nitrogen (DIN), such as nitrate, nitrite, and ammonium, are generally more limiting than dissolved organic nitrogen (DON), such as urea and amino acids (Hanisak 1983). Ammonium and nitrate, considered the most important sources of nitrogen, are more easily assimilated into macroalgae than other forms of nitrogen (Hanisak 1983). Nitrate, the most common form of DIN in marine systems, is present in concentrations, which are significantly higher than either ammonium or nitrite (Kain et al. 1990). Organic forms of nitrogen may play an important role in marine systems where inorganic forms of nitrogen become limiting. The growth of *Gracilaria tikvahiae* was supported by organic forms of nitrogen from different sources of organic waste (Asare 1980; Hanisak 1983). Although many studies have measured nitrogen uptake, very few have detected nitrogen release into the water column. Tyler and McGlathery (2006) estimated that actively growing *Gracilaria vermiculophylla* releases an average of 67% of gross daily nitrogen uptake back into the water column. Naldi and Wheeler (2002) conclude that both DIN and free amino acids were released from *Gracilaria pacifica* and *Ulva fenestrata*.

Uptake of nitrogen involves both active and passive transport into algal cells (D'Elia and DeBoer 1978). Active transport is the most common *in situ* as the concentrations in algal cells are typically 1000-fold higher than the water column (Lobban and Harrison 1994). Although nitrate may be the most common form of nitrogen available, ammonium may be preferentially assimilated and even inhibit the uptake of nitrate in some algae (DeBoer et al. 1978; Dortch 1990). One explanation for this occurrence is the difference in the energy requirement for assimilation. In order for

an alga to utilize nitrate, it must first convert it to ammonium. This fundamental physiological process is a two-step reduction requiring eight electrons. In the first step, the enzyme nitrate reductase utilizes two electrons to reduce nitrate to nitrite. NAD(P)H serves as the electron donor in this reaction. The second step requires six electrons for the enzyme nitrite reductase to reduce nitrite to ammonium. This step is coupled to photosynthetic electron transport using ferredoxin, which serves as the electron donor for nitrite reductase (Solomonson and Barber 1990). Once nitrate is reduced or ammonium is taken up, most algae employ glutamine synthetase as the primary ammonium-assimilating enzyme (Alwyn et al. 1998). According to Dortch (1990), a review of the literature indicates ammonium inhibition of nitrate assimilation is neither as universal nor as severe as is generally believed. In addition, nitrate can sometimes inhibit ammonium uptake and small amounts of ammonium may stimulate nitrate uptake (Dortch 1990).

### **Phosphorous:**

While nitrogen is generally considered to determine short-term production in coastal waters, the phosphorus supply may ultimately set the long-term limit (Tyrrell 1999). Phosphorus plays an important role in producing ATP for energy metabolism, biosynthesis of phospholipids, and the production of other cellular components. Phosphorus in marine ecosystems occurs as dissolved inorganic P (DIP), dissolved organic P (DOP), or particulate P (PP) (Valiela 1984). At least 90% of terrestrial phosphorous in coastal waters is PP associated with suspended solids carried by rivers (Follmi 1996). Because a large portion of riverine PP flux occurs during unpredictable episodes, the amount, composition, and fate of this phosphorus source is not well known

(Jordan et al. 2008). It is likely that much of this PP is converted to more biologically available forms of dissolved inorganic P (DIP). In addition to delivering large quantities of nitrate to coastal ecosystems, SGD has been found to contain extremely high levels of phosphate. In regions of high SGD, near the Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i, water column phosphate concentrations have been measured at  $\sim 4 \mu\text{M}$ , three orders of magnitude higher than ambient oceanic levels (Johnson et al. 2008).

### **Nitrogen vs. Phosphorous Limitation:**

Traditionally, the ratio of nitrogen to phosphorus in tissue samples and the water column has been used to infer nutrient limitation in algae and ecosystems. Howarth (1988) suggests that three main factors which will determine whether N or P will limit algal growth are: (1) the ratio of N:P in external nutrient inputs, (2) preferential loss of N or P in the photic zone due to biogeochemical processes (denitrification, sedimentation of N or P, adsorption of P), and (3) the extent of N fixation. When marine phytoplankton are grown under conditions of maximal growth (no limiting nutrients), the molar ratio of carbon to nitrogen to phosphorus approximates the Redfield ratio of 106:16:1 (C:N:P) (Redfield 1958; Goldman et al. 1979). N:P ratios  $< 16:1$  have been used to indicate nitrogen limitation with respect to the demands of algal metabolism (usually microalgae) (Redfield 1958). Using this criterion, water column samples in 22 of 27 estuaries, measured during peak algal growth, suggested N limitation (Boynton et al. 1982). In six of seven studies from tropical oligotrophic (less than or equal to  $1.5 \mu\text{M}$  DIN and less than or equal to  $0.2 \mu\text{M}$   $\text{PO}_4$ ) regions, water column DIN: $\text{PO}_4$  ratios were less than the Redfield ratio (Larned 1998). Nutrient analysis of Patuxent River estuary (Chesapeake

Bay) porewaters indicate a negative relationship between N:P ratios and salinity. Near the freshwater end of the estuary, N:P ratios were generally  $> 16$ . At the saline end of the gradient, N:P ratios were  $< 16$  and as low as 1.5 (Jordan et al. 2008). Some studies on the C:N:P ratio of macroalgal tissues have concluded that a critical N:P ratio exists between 10 to 15. Values higher than this critical ratio may indicate nitrogen limitation, while lower values may be evidence for nitrogen storage (Hanisak 1983). However, Atkinson and Smith (1983) conclude that the median C:N:P in benthic marine algae and seagrasses is about 550:30:1, suggesting inferences of nutrient limitation based on the Redfield ratio may not be applicable to these organisms. Of 96 species of phytoplankton, 46 macroalgal species, 27 seagrasses, 11 freshwater angiosperms, and several mixed communities of macroalgae and phytoplankton, N and P concentrations tend to be higher in phytoplankton compared to macrophytes (Duarte 1992).

It appears that methods employing a generalized elemental ratio may not provide accurate conclusions regarding limitation because of fundamental variability in species optimal growth requirements, local nutrient delivery, other abiotic factors (temperature, light, and salinity) and that manipulative experiments rarely follow. Many studies stress that actual N:P ratios in algae are quite variable as algae will absorb more phosphorus than predicted (McAllister et al. 1961; Vince and Valiela 1973). A more reliable assessment of nutrient limitation in algae and ecosystems is laboratory and *in situ* enrichment experiments (Fong et al. 1993; Larned 1998).

The results of nutrient enrichment experiments on tropical macroalgae have concluded that both nitrogen (Lapointe 1987; Lapointe et al. 1987; Lapointe and O'Connell 1989; Littler et al. 1991; McGlathery 1992; Larned 1998) and phosphorus

(Lapointe et al. 1987; Littler et al. 1991; Lapointe et al. 1992; Lapointe et al. 1993) limit productivity in oligotrophic waters. The addition of both N and P have greater effects on growth together than when supplied separately suggesting a secondary limitation by P; saturating amounts of N therefore cannot substitute for the P requirements of a plant (Howarth 1988). If both N and P occur at high concentrations, then trace metals may limit the growth of macrophytes (Prince 1974). Of 36 species of tropical macroalgae in seven studies, growth was enhanced by inorganic nitrogen in 22 species and by inorganic phosphorus in 17 species (Larned 1998). The freshwater macroalga *Spirogyra fluviatilis* was found to have an optimal molar C:N:P ratio of 1800: 87:1 (Townsend 2008). Townsend et al. (2008 ) suggest this indicates the Redfield ratio may not apply to macroalgae and tissue stoichiometry should only be used to indicate nutrient limitation when a species optimal C:N:P ratio is known.

### **Previous Research on Species of *Gracilaria*:**

A relatively large amount of research has focused on species in the genus *Gracilaria* due to their global distribution, diversity of species (>150 species described, (Byrne et al. 2002), commercial interest in high quality agar, and potential as a bioindicator of water quality. According to Tseng (2001), *Gracilaria* is now the most important agarophyte, producing 60% of the world's agar; commercial cultivation is performed on a very large scale in several countries such as Chile, China and Taiwan. Many species of *Gracilaria* are known to display a strong response to changes in water column nutrient concentrations and are characteristically tolerant to abiotic



environmental factors such as salinity, temperature, and irradiance (Bird et al. 1979; Dawes et al. 1984; Jones et al. 1996).

In general, when concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus increase, *Gracilaria* species increase productivity and change the chemical composition of tissues. A positive correlation was shown with uptake rate and concentration for both ammonium and phosphate in *Gracilaria tikvahiae* (Friedlander and Dawes 1985). *Gracilaria* species take up nutrients in excess of immediate growth requirements during nutrient pulses and store those nutrients for metabolic use during nutrient limited durations. Nitrogen storage in red algae occurs in the form of excess tissue N, accessory pigments, or amino acids (Ryther et al. 1981). *G. tikvahiae* was found to store excess nitrogen as amino acids and proteins (Bird et al. 1982). Stored nutrients can be metabolized for protein when internal N reserves are depleted (Jones et al. 1996). After only six hours soaking in full nutrient medium, *G. tikvahiae* was able to sustain non-nutrient-limiting growth rates for two weeks before declining (Ryther et al. 1981). Following ten days of nitrogen enrichment, *G. tenuistipitata* sustained rapid growth for more than 20 days in unenriched water (Liu and Dong 2001). Although a positive relationship between growth rate and nutrient uptake exists, chemical toxicity will develop at a certain concentration threshold specific to each element and species. The growth rate of *G. lemaneiformis* increased with increasing nutrients but dropped significantly when N/P exceeded 400/25  $\mu\text{M}$ . At 600/37.5  $\mu\text{M}$ , ruptured, irregularly aligned thylakoids and accumulation of starch grains gave evidence of chloroplast damage (Yu and Yang 2008).

First principles of plant physiology dictate that ammonium is preferred over nitrate; this has been supported by work with some marine algae (Nelson et al. 1980). Uptake of

nitrate and nitrite may be suppressed under conditions of elevated ammonium (D'Elia and DeBoer 1978; Ryther et al. 1981). *G. tenuistipitata* had higher uptake rates for ammonium than nitrate in outdoor tank culture with brackish seawater (Haglund and Pedersén 1993). Ammonium enrichment produced higher growth rates in *G. foliifera* than nitrate, sewage, or urea enrichment (DeBoer et al. 1978). D'Elia and DeBoer (1978) concluded that nitrate uptake became suppressed in *G. foliifera* at 5 $\mu$ M NH<sub>4</sub>. NH<sub>4</sub> was found to be preferred over nitrate even when *G. foliifera* were preconditioned with nitrate as the only source of nitrogen (D'Elia and DeBoer 1978). However, no significant differences in growth rate were detected when *G. cornea* was cultured in nitrate, ammonium, or urea (Navarro-Angulo and Robledo 1999). In *G. conferta*, ammonium and nitrate additions were found to be equally effective, but high phosphate concentrations inhibited growth (Friedlander and Ben-Amotz 1991). However *Gracilaria tenuistipitata* was shown to have a higher growth rate, a five-fold increase in photosynthetic rate, a three-fold increase in Rubisco content, increased content of Chlorophyll *a* (Chl *a*), phycobiliproteins, and greater total soluble proteins when grown in enriched phosphate (30  $\mu$ M) compared to low phosphate treatments (3  $\mu$ M) (Garcia-Sanchez et al. 1996).

It is well understood that nutrients play a major role in primary productivity in marine environments although many other abiotic and biotic factors are of importance. Salinity, irradiance, and temperature have also been shown to determine the growth rate and distribution of species.

**Salinity:**

Salinity is one of the most critical chemical factors affecting the growth rate, development, and distribution of seaweeds (Hoyle 1975; Koch and Lawrence 1987; Dawes et al. 1999; Israel et al. 1999). Although variation exists among the world's oceans, an average value of 34.85 ‰ is reported for the salinity of all oceanic water bodies (Kalle 1971). Physiological interactions such as the movement of ions and water molecules across cell membranes can be affected by changes in salinity (Kirst 1989; Reed 1990; Lobban and Harrison 1994; Kirst 1995). The maintenance of an organism's osmotic balance requires energy input (Kirst 1989) and productivity of an alga may be reduced as a result (Bird et al. 1979; Bird and McLachlan 1986; Edwards et al. 1988; Murthy et al. 1988; Karsten and Kirst 1989; Friedlander 1992; Kamer and Fong 2000). Gessner and Schramm (1971) concluded that decreases in the photosynthetic rate of marine algae are directly proportional to decreases in salinity levels. According to Lavery and McComb (1991), the number of species of macroalgae usually decreases with decreasing salinity.

Algae, which exploit certain coastal areas with periodic pulsation of brackish or freshwater (eg. estuaries, river mouths, SGD sites), must be able to maintain high productivity while withstanding rapid fluctuations in water column salinity. Maximal growth rates for some tropical macroalgae have been observed in water with decreased salinity from ambient oceanic levels (35 ‰). Species in the genus *Gracilaria* have long been known as euryhaline species able to adapt to and tolerate wide variations in salinity (Bird et al. 1979; Bird and McLachlan 1986; Yokoya and De-Oliveira 1992). In culture, the growth rate of *Gracilaria chorda* and *G. verrucosa* reached a maximum in 25 ‰

salinity water of 4.47 % d<sup>-1</sup> at 25°C and 4.95 % d<sup>-1</sup> at 30°C (Choi et al. 2006). Causey et al. (1946) report positive *G. verrucosa* growth in 15-50 ‰ salinity with optimal growth occurring between 25-35 ‰. Kishnamurthy (1954) observed *G. verrucosa* in a Madras salt marsh where salinity ranges from 2.5 to 42 ‰. Maximum growth rates for *G. vermiculophylla* were observed at 20 ‰ salinity and positive growth was measured in treatments from 5-60 ‰ salinity (Yokoya et al. 1999). Hoyle (1976) concludes that *G. coronopifolia* grow fastest at 22 ‰ salinity and 20 μM NH<sub>4</sub>. The relative growth rate of *G. tenuistipitata* grown at 20 ‰ salinity at 20°C was significantly higher than 30 ‰ or 39 ‰ salinity treatments (Israel et al. 1999). A significant inverse correlation (R= 0.45; p< 0.05) was found between relative growth rate and salinity in *G. birdiae* when grown in an estuary over a six-month period. The results of this research indicate *G. coronopifolia* and congeners not only tolerate a wide variety of salinities but may also have increased productivity in waters with reduced salinity compared to ambient oceanic conditions.

### **Irradiance:**

Irradiance is commonly held as the most important ecological factor in the marine environment (Hoyle 1975). Growth rates in algae generally increase with increasing irradiance until photosynthesis is saturated. As irradiance increases beyond saturating levels, a decrease in photosynthesis (photoinhibition) may occur. The growth of *Garcilaria foliifera* increased linearly with increasing irradiance to 0.43 doubling per day at high light levels *in situ* (Lapointe 1981). The quantity and composition of light is a function of water clarity, depth (Valiela 1984), season, time of day, cloud cover, and surface conditions (Hoyle 1975). When grown under blue light, *Gracilaria tenuistipitata*

had lower maximal photosynthetic rates than white light controls (Mercado et al. 2002). Irradiance can have complex interactions with absorption of inorganic nutrients. The uptake of nitrate and nitrite has a strong interaction with irradiance when compared to ammonium (Falkowski 1983; Hanisak and Ryther 1984). Many studies have suggested that nitrate reductase expression and activity in algae and higher plants is controlled by biological clock induced by irradiance (Lillo 1984; Ramalho et al. 1995; Lopes et al. 1997; Lillo et al. 1998; Granbom et al. 2007).

Tropical regions are known to receive the highest global levels of photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) and UV irradiance (Caldwell et al. 1989; Häder 1993), which can be five-fold higher than macroalgal requirements (Beach et al. 1995). Marine primary producers possess mechanisms that efficiently capture light at low irradiance levels or minimize damage induced by excessive radiation. Some algal species subjected to low irradiance, have developed adaptations for efficient harvesting of photons such as high accessory pigment to Chlorophyll *a* ratios (Reiskind et al. 1989). Seaweeds from three taxonomic classes showed increased antenna pigment content with decreasing irradiance leading to an increase in the ratio of accessory pigment to Chl *a* (Ramus et al. 1976b; Ramus et al. 1976a; Ramus et al. 1977). In *G. foliifera*, an increased R-phycoerythrin : Chl *a* ratio was related to enhanced photosynthetic performance at sub-saturating light intensities (Rosenberg and Ramus 1982). In *G. tenuistipitata*, carotenoid pigments were found to play an important role in the protection of the photosynthetic apparatus by epoxidating reactions (Carnicas et al. 1999).

Lower respiration rates and lower light compensation points ( $I_c$ ) are typical of shade-adapted primary producers when compared to sun adapted plants. Shade-tolerant

primary producers require less irradiance to saturate photosynthesis ( $I_k$ ) and have higher quantum efficiencies ( $\alpha$ ) (Beach and Smith 1996). The mat-like morphology of some tropical rhodophytes promotes sun-shade acclimation along thalli axes of less than 10cm. Distinct differences in the photosynthetic performance of canopy versus understory thalli microsites has been measured in *Laurencia mcdermidiae* and *Ahnfeltiopsis concinna* (Beach and Smith 1996). *Gracilaria salicornia*, an opportunistic invasive alga in Hawai'i, was found to exhibit similar sun-shade acclimation characteristics within its mat-like morphology. The orange colored canopy of this alga was exposed to 2389  $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$  at a depth of 0.5m, while the red thalli within the under-story were exposed to only 0.2 to 4.9% of canopy irradiance. Significant regression relationships were found of *in vivo* absorbance for phycoerythrin and carotenoid-specific maxima with ( $I_k$ ), ( $I_c$ ), and  $P_{\text{max}}$  indicating variations in thalli pigmentation as a response to sun-shade acclimation within a single individual (Beach et al. 1997).

When marine algae are exposed to high levels of irradiance, a decrease in photosynthesis due to photoinhibition (a down-regulatory process at photosystem II) may occur. When *G. chilensis* was exposed to full solar radiation at noon for three hours and then incubated under shade for recovery, a 16% decrease in photosynthesis was observed and recovery was close to 88%. When algae in treatments exposed to full solar radiation without UVB, photosynthetic recovery was close to 100% indicating that UVB radiation may be damaging to macroalgae (Gomez et al. 2005). Evidence of photoinhibition and reduced productivity was observed in the canopy tissues of *Ahnfeltiopsis concinna* (Beach and Smith 1996). The increased carotenoid concentration of orange colored

canopy tissues and mat morphology is likely a mechanism to mitigate photo-induced damage to marine algae (Beach and Smith 1996; Beach et al. 1997).

### **Temperature:**

The effect of temperature on enzymatic processes has been extensively studied in all aspects of biology. All organisms have an optimal range of temperatures in which they are most efficient. In macroalgae, temperature has been found to affect the respiration and dark photosynthetic enzyme activity (Kain et al. 1990) as well absorption of nutrients. Higher temperatures have been shown to increase the uptake of nutrients and the maximum photosynthetic rate of algae at a particular light level (Valiela 1984). Higher photosynthetic and respiratory rates were measured in *Gracilaria cornea* exposed to 25-35°C compared to 15°C (Dawes et al. 1999). Algal cells at lower temperatures were found to have higher concentrations of pigments, enzymes, and carbon (Valiela 1984). *Gracilaria tikvahiae* was able to rapidly respond to a temperature change from 10°C to 20°C with a 20-fold increase in growth (Bird et al. 1979). Maximal growth of *Gracilaria chorda* was observed between 18-24°C (Kakita and Kamishima 2006). In outdoor laboratory culture of *Gracilaria*, nutrient enrichment was found to shift the low temperature growth limit from 20°C to 15°C (Tsai et al. 2005). There is some evidence that the optimal temperature for an alga varies with different stages of its life cycle. The optimal temperature for a *G. vermiculophylla* tetrasporophyte was 15-25°C while that of the gametophyte was 20-30°C (Yokoya et al. 1999).

### **Published *Gracilaria* Growth Rates:**

Over the past 70 years, an extensive amount of research has focused on the growth and physiology of species in the genus *Gracilaria*. Published growth rates for *Gracilaria spp.* are as variable as the methods and experimental conditions. Daily growth rates of this genus range from less than 1% d<sup>-1</sup> to more than 25% d<sup>-1</sup>. An average maximal growth rate of *Gracilaria spp.*, from 21 species and 33 studies reported in the literature, is ~7 % d<sup>-1</sup> (SD=0.05 % per day) (Table 1.1).

### **Pulse Amplitude Modulation (PAM) Fluorometry:**

In the early 1990s, a novel method in the field of photophysiology emerged allowing for rapid, noninvasive, in-situ measurements of photosynthetic parameters. Pulse amplitude modulation (PAM) fluorescence is a technique that measures Chl *a* fluorescence. A technique called a rapid light curve (RLC) has become a fast and effective method for determining the photosynthetic response of algae at various levels of irradiance. This technique calculates the electron transport rate (ETR) for photosystem II via multiplying the irradiance applied by the light adapted fluorescence yield (Change in (F/ Fm')) (Genty et al. 1989). RLCs can assess the present photosynthetic capacity as well as an organism's potential activity over a wide range of light intensities. This type of technique is known as a Photosynthesis vs. Irradiance (P vs. I) curve and appears similar to traditional oxygen-based curves, but should not be interpreted as exactly similar (Hawes et al. 2003). In both RLCs and traditional P vs. I irradiance curves, there can be three distinct areas of the curve: the light limited, minimum saturation and a



downturn in rate at high irradiance levels.

At low light levels, photosynthesis is limited by irradiance. The slope of the curve in this light-limiting region ( $\alpha$ ) has been shown to be proportional to the efficiency of light capture (Schreiber 2004). Saroussi and Beer (2007) conclude that  $\alpha$ , as estimated from an RLC, may not be an accurate method of estimating maximal quantum yield and suggest that  $Y_0$  should be used instead because PAM measures this parameter directly. The minimum saturating irradiance ( $E_k$  for PAM,  $I_k$  for  $O_2$ ) is identified by finding the interception of  $\alpha$  with the maximum rate ( $ETR_{max}$ ,  $P_{max}$ ). Below  $E_k$ , photochemical quenching dominates, while above  $E_k$ , fluorescence quenching dominates. At high irradiance, PAM curves may decline, suggesting apparent photoinhibition as in traditional oxygen curves. Photoinhibition was suggested from PAM and oxygen evolution measurements in *Cladophora pellucida* and *C. prolifera* (Häder et al. 1997) and *Dictyota dichotoma* (Hanelt et al. 1994). Using PAM, Häder et al. (1999) concluded that sun-adapted plants recover faster from photoinhibition than algae adapted to shaded sites. The detection of photoinhibition via RLCs has been challenged in the literature, as there may not be sufficient time for photoinhibition to occur (Ralph and Gademann 2005).

A recently developed device called Diving-PAM (Walz, Germany) has been shown to produce photosynthetic measurements *in situ* in marine angiosperms (Beer et al. 1998; Ralph et al. 1998; Beer and Bjork 2000; Beer et al. 2006), and macroalgae (Beer et al. 2000; Beer and Axelsson 2004), which closely correlate with oxygen evolution. A linear relationship was found between ETR and gross oxygen evolution in *Ulva fasciata* and *U. lactuca* with increasing irradiance up to  $600 \mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$  (Beer et al. 2000) and in *Ulva lactuca* at lower irradiances (Longstaff et al. 2002). Evidence of the uncoupling of

this Oxygen evolution / PAM-ETR relationship at high irradiance was found in *Ulva australis* and *Porphyra columbina* when ETRs were overestimated in comparison with gross oxygen evolution (Franklin and Badger 2001). Oxygen evolution was also found to decrease in relation to ETR in the seagrass *Halophia stipulacea* and *Zostera marina* (Beer et al. 1998). Using *Ulva fasciata* and *U. reticulata*, Carr and Bjork (2003), conclude that ETR was found to decrease at high irradiances while oxygen evolution remained constant. Gilbert et al. (2000) report that the relationship between ETR and oxygen evolution began to deviate from linearity at high irradiances in four planktonic algal species. Because the O<sub>2</sub>:ETR ratio is relatively constant at low light levels, RLCs may well estimate photosynthetic rates at non-saturating irradiances (Carr and Bjork 2003).

In an effort to assess to what degree high irradiances would limit ETR measurements for macroalgae of different divisions, Beer and Axelsson (2004) compared PAM and oxygen evolution measurements on green, brown and red macroalgae. In agreement with previous studies, all the algae displayed a clear positive correlation between O<sub>2</sub> evolution and ETR. At high irradiances, all the algae show a decrease in ETR while O<sub>2</sub> evolution remained relatively constant. It was observed that the O<sub>2</sub>/ETR ratio began to increase when effective quantum yield of photosystem II (Y) reached a critical value of 0.1. Thus, Beer and Axelsson recommend that ETR should only be used as a measure of photosynthetic rate when quantum yield exceeds 0.1 and note that the irradiance level associated with this value may vary with species and previous irradiance history (Beer and Axelsson 2004).

## **Conclusions and Study Objectives:**

Three decades since Johannes first concluded that the geohydrochemical properties of SGD deserved more attention from marine ecologists, we are still left with substantial areas that remain unexplored in the current knowledge of the land-sea interface. Many studies have been successful at quantifying the flux rate and chemical composition of SGD in coastal environments. Fewer studies have found correlative evidence or even suggest that SGD in fact plays an important role determining primary productivity of coastal regions. Thus far, little evidence for a causal relationship between SGD and coastal biological processes and has emerged. This may be due in part to the inherent difficulty in the detection of SGD (Burnett et al. 2003) and the presumably even more difficult task of *in situ* manipulation and control design. Until an appropriate and robust method of *in situ* manipulation is developed, this question may best be answered within the highly controlled environment offered by growth chambers.

The collective body of knowledge summarized in this review suggests that irradiance, nutrients, salinity, and temperature are the most important factors determining the productivity and distribution of *Gracilaria* species. The relative importance of these parameters has been shown to vary among species, season, and location. Manipulative experiments are likely the most reliable method to determine optimal conditions for a species. While numerous studies have investigated the growth response and quality of agar in *Gracilaria* species, studies which measure the physiological response of this genus to combinations of abiotic factors such as salinity, light and temperature are rare (Dawes et al. 1999). Furthermore, simultaneous variation of nitrogen, phosphorous, and

salinity simulating the dynamic mixing associated with SGD and coastal waters has never been attempted.

The objective of this study was to measure the physiological effects of simulated SGD on an endemic species of macroalgae in a laboratory setting using empirical data on SGD from Hawai'i to determine treatment conditions. Based on previous research with *Gracilaria coronopifolia* and congeners, conditions of reduced salinity and increased nutrients may increase the productivity of *G. coronopifolia* in otherwise oligotrophic water. It is hypothesized that moderate levels of simulated SGD will increase the growth rate and photosynthetic performance of *G. coronopifolia* compared to ambient oceanic controls.

**Tables:**

**Table 1.1** Maximum Growth Rates (% per day) published for species of *Gracilaria* .

<b><i>Gracilaria species</i></b>	<b>Maximum Growth Rate (%d<sup>-1</sup>)</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<i>arcuata</i>	3.50%	Nelson et al. 1980
<i>balinae</i>	1.12%	Hurtado-Ponce et al. 1997
<i>bursapastoris</i>	12.24%	Hoyle 1978
<i>bursapastoris</i>	2.72%	Hoyle 1978
<i>bursapastoris</i>	5.00%	Hoyle 1976
<i>bursapastoris</i>	8.30%	Hunt et al. 1979
<i>chilensis</i>	3.17%	Pickering et al. 1993
<i>chilensis</i>	4.60%	Santelices et al.1993
<i>chilensis</i>	7.00%	Troell et al. 1997
<i>chorda</i>	4.47%	Choi et al. 2006
<i>cornea</i>	5.70%	Causey et al. 1946
<i>cornea</i>	14.00%	Navarro- Angulo et al. 1999
<i>coronopifolia</i>	1.47%	Hoyle 1978
<i>coronopifolia</i>	6.41%	Hoyle 1978
<i>coronopifolia</i>	8.30%	Hunt et al. 1979
<i>crassa</i>	2.00%	Hoyle 1976
<i>debilis</i>	3.60%	Goldstein 1973b
<i>edulis</i>	7.55%	Nelson et al. 1980
<i>edulis</i>	5.10%	Gerung et al. 1999
<i>firma</i>	0.91%	Chirapart and Ohno 1993
<i>fisheri</i>	2.56%	Chirapart and Ohno 1993
<i>foliifera</i>	12.00%	DeBoer et al. 1978
<i>foliifera</i>	12.70%	Kim and Humm 1965
<i>foliifera</i>	12.00%	Kim and Humm 1965
<i>sp.</i>	10.00%	Tsai et al. 2005
<i>gracilis</i>	11.00%	Wakiba et al. 2001
<i>lemaniformis</i>	13.90%	Yang et al. 2006
<i>lemaniformis</i>	11.71%	Yang et al. 2006
<i>lemaniformis</i>	11.03%	Zhou et al. 2006

**Table 1.1** Maximum Growth Rates (Continued)

<b><i>Gracilaria species</i></b>	<b>Maximum Growth Rate (% d<sup>-1</sup>)</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<i>parvispora</i>	2.65%	Glenn et al. 1998
<i>parvispora</i>	4.60%	Nelson et al. 2001
<i>parvispora</i>	10.00%	Nagler et al. 2003
<i>parvispora</i>	8.90%	Ryder et al. 2004
<i>parvispora</i>	10.30%	Ryder et al. 2004
<i>salicornia</i>	0.86%	Chirapart and Ohno 1993
<i>salicornia</i>	4.90%	Gerung et al. 1999
<i>salicornia</i>	10.77%	Smith et al. 1994
<i>tenuistipata</i>	9.00%	Haglund and Pedersén 1993
<i>tenuistipitata</i>	7.00%	Hunt et al. 1979
<i>tenuistipitata</i>	3.30%	Wu et al. 1993
<i>tenuistipitata</i> var. <i>liui</i>	18.30%	Israel et al. 1999
<i>tikvahiae</i>	5.76%	Hanisak 1987
<i>verrucosa</i>	25.90%	Causey et al. 1946
<i>verrucosa</i>	4.45%	Chirapart and Ohno 1993
<i>verrucosa</i>	4.95%	Choi et al. 2006
<i>verrucosa</i>	5.33%	Jones 1959a
<i>verrucosa</i>	2.60%	Jones 1959b
<i>verrucosa</i>	8.85%	Kim et al. 1969
<i>verrucosa</i>	4.97%	Kim 1970
<i>verrucosa</i>	5.40%	Kim 1970
<b>Mean</b>	<b>7.37%</b>	
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>± 0.05</b>	

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## Chapter 2:

# Physiological Effects of Simulated Submarine Groundwater Discharge on the Hawaiian Endemic Edible Alga *Gracilaria coronopifolia*

### Abstract:

Submarine groundwater discharge (SGD) is a significant source of nutrients to many coastal environments. The difficulty of experimental manipulation *in situ* has resulted in little evidence for a causal relationship between SGD and coastal biological processes. In this study, we examined the physiological response of the endemic edible Hawaiian rhodophyte, *Gracilaria coronopifolia*, to varied levels of simulated SGD in a laboratory setting. Forty-eight thalli were grown in a unidirectional flow-through mesocosm at 25°C and 250  $\mu\text{M m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$  PAR during two replicate trials. To simulate increasing levels of SGD, four treatments were established, ranging from high salinity / low nutrient to low salinity / high nutrient water. Treatment levels were determined from empirical relationships among salinity, nitrate, and phosphate from known sites of SGD near Kona, Hawai'i. After 16 days, the growth rate, apical tip development (Tip Score and Tip Index), and photosynthetic parameters ( $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$ ,  $\alpha$ ,  $E_k$ ) via Pulse Amplitude Modulated (PAM) fluorometry were determined. The 27 ‰ SGD treatment (26.60  $\mu\text{M-N}$ , 1.10  $\mu\text{M-P}$ , 27 ‰ salinity) provided optimal conditions for growth of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* and had higher mean values for all parameters measured. The mean growth rate in the 27 ‰ SGD treatment (3%  $\text{day}^{-1}$ ) was 3-fold greater than controls (0.20  $\mu\text{M-N}$ , 0.05  $\mu\text{M-P}$ , 35 ‰ salinity).  $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$ ,  $E_k$ , Tip Index and growth rate were significantly greater in the 27

‰ SGD treatment compared to controls. Regression relationships indicate simulated SGD levels have some ability to predict growth rate, Tip Score,  $ETR_{max}$ , and  $E_k$ . The parameters Tip Score and Tip Index are informative approaches to quantify development of new apices for complex morphologies.

The results of this study indicate moderate levels of SGD input to the coastal environment may increase the growth rate, apical tip development, and photosynthetic performance of *G. coronopifolia* on otherwise oligotrophic Hawaiian reefs. This work has important implications for coastal ecosystems and management of terrestrial groundwater resources.

### **Introduction:**

Terrestrial groundwater can discharge directly into the marine environment wherever a coastal aquifer is connected to the sea (Burnett et al. 2003). Until recently, this process known as submarine groundwater discharge (SGD), has been largely ignored by coastal managers and scientists because of the difficulty in assessment and the perception that this process rarely occurred. With renewed interest and advances in detection techniques, many studies have recently concluded that SGD is a significant source of nutrients to numerous coastal environments (Johannes 1980; D'Elia et al. 1981; Giblin and Gaines 1990; Valiela et al. 1990; Simmons 1992; Moore 1996; Lapointe 1997; Paerl 1997; Corbett et al. 1999; Burnett et al. 2001; Burnett et al. 2003; Moore et al. 2009). While the quality and quantity of groundwater input to marine environments has been documented in the literature, little is known about the effects SGD on biological processes in coastal ecosystems.

The influx of SGD to the benthic environment increases nutrient concentrations while decreasing temperature and salinity of local waters compared to ambient oceanic conditions (Burnett et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2008). The pore waters of coastal sediments have repeatedly been found to contain nitrate and phosphate concentrations several orders of magnitude greater than that of the overlying water column (Valiela et al. 1990). In some locations, nutrient input via SGD rivals local rivers and streams. On the island of Oahu, total nutrient loading in Kahana Bay via SGD, was equal or greater than that carried by surface runoff (Garrison et al. 2003). Total SGD flux (total nutrient addition / bottom area) for Yeosu Bay, Korea is 26 mM DIN  $\text{m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$  and 0.11 DIP mM  $\text{m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$ , an order of magnitude greater than measurements from both stream water and ocean sediments (Hwang et al. 2005). In arid areas, SGD may be the only source of fresh water to coastal environments; on the west coast of the Island of Hawai'i, nearly all the fresh water entering the ocean was in the form of SGD (Kay et al. 1977) with similar observations in the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico (Hanshaw and Back 1980).

The biological effects of SGD in tropical oligotrophic (nutrient deficient) environments such as these may be amplified as nutrient availability largely controls primary productivity. Although phosphorus limitation has been shown in some species (Lapointe 1987; Lapointe et al. 1987; Littler et al. 1991; Lapointe et al. 1992), additions of nitrogen will generally increase macroalgal biomass and abundance (McGlathery 1992; Valiela et al. 1992; Fong et al. 1993; Peckol et al. 1994; Fong et al. 1996; Hernandez et al. 1997; Valiela et al. 1997; Larned 1998; Kamer and Fong 2001). Numerous studies have concluded that the type and severity of nutrient limitation may be habitat or species specific (Lapointe et al. 1987; Larned 1998).

Salinity is one of the most critical chemical factors affecting the growth rate, development, and distribution of marine plants (Hoyle 1975; Koch and Lawrence 1987; Dawes et al. 1999; Israel et al. 1999). Maximal growth rates for some tropical macroalgae have been observed in water with decreased salinity from ambient oceanic levels (35 ‰). A maximum growth rate of 13 % d<sup>-1</sup> for *Grateloupia filicina* was observed at 20 ‰ salinity (Wong and Chang 2000). In culture, the growth rate of *Gracilaria chorda* and *G. verrucosa* reached a maximum in 25 ‰ salinity of 4.47 % d<sup>-1</sup> at 25°C and 4.95 % d<sup>-1</sup> at 30 °C (Choi et al. 2006). Causey et al. (1946) report optimal growth of *G. verrucosa* occurring between 25-35 ‰ salinity. Maximum growth rates for *G. vermiculophylla* were observed at 20 ‰ salinity (Yokoya et al. 1999). Hoyle (1976) concludes that *G. coronopifolia* and *G. bursapastoris* grow fastest at 22 ‰ salinity. The relative growth rate of *G. tenuistipitata* grown at 20 ‰ salinity was significantly higher than in 30 or 39 ‰ salinity treatments (Israel et al. 1999).

Increases in nutrients and decreases in salinity associated with SGD influx may synergistically increase the productivity of some tropical marine species. Herrera-Silveira suggest that SGD has played a major role in the shift from seagrass (*Thalassia testudinum*) dominated cover to green filamentous algae and strongly influences primary production as well as trophic status at sites near the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico (Herrera-Silveira 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 2002; Herrera-Silveira and Morales-Ojeda 2009). Elevated δ <sup>15</sup>N levels in *Cladophora sericea* suggest terrestrial based nutrients via SGD are likely to play an important role in the development of algal blooms on Maui reefs (Smith et al. 2005). A similar study by Lapointe (1997)

concluded that increased  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ , DIN and decreased salinity indicate SGD may play a role in macroalgal blooms on coral reefs in both Florida and Jamaica.

Many studies have been successful at quantifying the flux rate and chemical composition of SGD in coastal environments. Fewer studies show correlative evidence or even suggest that SGD plays an important role determining primary productivity of coastal regions. Thus far, little evidence for a causal relationship between SGD and coastal biological processes and has emerged. This may be attributable to inherent difficulties in the detection of SGD (Burnett et al. 2003; Leote et al. 2008) and the presumably even more difficult task of implementing *in-situ* manipulations and controls. The objective of this study was to measure the physiological effects of simulated SGD on an endemic Hawaiian species of macroalgae in a controlled laboratory setting using empirical SGD data from Hawai‘i to determine treatment conditions. Moderate levels of simulated SGD are expected to increase the growth rate, branching morphology (apical tip development) and photosynthetic performance of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* when compared to ambient controls.

### **Methodology:**

#### **Algae Collections and Pretreatment:**

Two replicate experiments were conducted at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. *Gracilaria coronopifolia* was collected from the south shore of Oahu on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2007 and October 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 at Ala Moana Beach. Thalli were then transported to the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in a cooler with seawater. One thallus was cut from each collected sample and placed in a three-liter beaker containing a mixture of distilled water,

Instant Ocean<sup>®</sup> sea salt at 35 ‰ salinity, and nutrients at ambient oceanic levels (0.02  $\mu\text{M}$   $\text{NO}_3^-$ , 0.05  $\mu\text{M}$   $\text{P}_i$ ). Thalli were then placed into a growth chamber for at least ten days to heal and acclimate to growth chamber conditions.

### **Experimental Growth Chamber Setup:**

A growth chamber (Environmental Growth Chambers, model GC-15) was modified to accommodate a unidirectional flow-through saltwater system. Four 200-liter HDPE drums held treatment water and were located next to the EGC. A digital Ismatec<sup>™</sup> variable speed peristaltic pump (ISM 444) with 24 independent channels provided consistent flow of treatment water from the drums into 24 replicate 800 ml beakers. The flow rate was set to allow 1.6 liters of treatment water to enter each beaker  $\text{d}^{-1}$ . Treatment water entered the bottom of each beaker via pharmaceutical grade tubing (2.06 mm diameter) and slowly spilled from the top into a common water bath. The water bath, consisting of two clear plastic storage bins, buffered extremes in temperature for 12 sample beakers within each bin. Ten centimeters from the bottom of each bin, a hole allowed for gravity feed of wastewater to a drain outside of the EGC. Each beaker was equipped with aeration from a clear tube and air stone. Irradiance was set at 250  $\mu\text{M}$  photon  $\text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  PAR as determined by a spherical Li-Cor<sup>®</sup> quantum sensor (model LI-193SA, Li-Cor, NE, USA), on a 12h:12h light:dark cycle. For a single trial, this mesocosm design supported four treatments of six samples for a total of 24 beakers.

### **Selection of Experimental Thalli:**

Twenty-four thalli were selected for a single experimental trial. The criterion for thalli selection was  $50 \leq (\text{Sample wet mass} / \text{apical tip number}) \leq 100$ . This measure of mass to tip ratio, known hereafter as “Tip Score”, was devised to control for variability among samples. Pilot studies confirmed that Tip Score was positively correlated with growth rate (data not shown). Samples were cleaned of epiphytes and inspected with a dissecting microscope to ensure that no reproductive tissues were present.

### **Chemical Composition of Treatments:**

Four different treatments were chosen to simulate varied levels of SGD. Using empirical relationships (Johnson et al. 2008), the concentration of nitrate, phosphate, and salinity was determined. From measurement of SGD plumes on the Kona coast of the Big Island, Hawai‘i, Johnson et al. (2008) calculated highly significant regression equations of both nitrate and phosphate with salinity, which were used to determine the nutrient concentration of each treatment at four levels of salinity. The nutrient equations in micromoles are  $[\text{NO}_3^-] = (-3.3) * \text{Salinity} + 115.7$  ( $R^2 = 0.93$ ,  $n = 99$ ) and  $[\text{PO}_4^{3-}] = (-0.14) * \text{Salinity} + 4.9$  ( $R^2 = 0.98$ ,  $n = 72$ ). Treatment water was a mixture of distilled water, Instant Ocean<sup>®</sup> sea salt to a desired salinity, and reagent grade nutrients ( $\text{NaNO}_3$ ,  $\text{NaPO}_4$ ). The four treatments were:

- A) 35 ‰ salinity + ( 0.20  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 0.05  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate)
- B) 27 ‰ salinity + ( 7.51  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 0.15  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate)
- C) 19 ‰ salinity + (23.36  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 1.65  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate)
- D) 11 ‰ salinity + (82.68  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 3.75  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate)



When the phosphate equation was solved using 35 ‰ salinity,  $[\text{PO}_4^{3-}] = 0.00$ . To avoid P limitation,  $0.05 \mu\text{M P}$  was chosen for the 35 ‰ treatment. This was determined to be an ecologically relevant concentration for ambient ocean water. The N:P ratios of Johnson et al.'s (2008) data set revealed an inverse correlation of N:P with salinity (Figure 2.1). An N:P ratio of four was chosen for the 35 ‰ treatment as this value was smaller than the mean (5.2) and larger than the median (3.0) of the Johnson et al. data for salinities 34.1-35 ‰. The N:P ratio of the remaining three treatments were  $\sim 23.6$ .

### **Diving PAM Modifications:**

In trial two, a Diving-PAM (Underwater PAM, Walz Co., Germany) was modified by constricting the exposed surface area of the fiber optic cable. A rubber cap with a 1 mm x 2 mm slit cut in the center was placed over the cable's end. As a result of this slight modification, ETR measurements were less variable when compared to trial one. PAM measurements are area dependent and thus calculated parameters cannot be pooled between trials. The PAM results of trial two will be reported in this study.

### **Data Collection Protocol:**

On day zero, each sample was blotted dry with a Kimwipe<sup>®</sup> and the initial wet mass was determined using a Sartorius balance (model A200S). Apical tip number was recorded, and the sample was photographed with a Canon digital camera (Rebel XT). A rapid light curve (RLC) was conducted using Pulse Amplitude Modulated (PAM) Fluorometry (Underwater PAM, Walz Co., Germany). All samples were then randomly assigned to a treatment.

Every four days, for 16 days, samples were removed from the growth chamber and placed in a sampling tray using a blind sampling method. The tray was then placed on shaker table under  $50 \mu\text{mol photon meter}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  PAR. On days 0, 4, 8, 12, and 16, the wet mass of all samples was measured and the number of live apical tips for each plant was recorded. RLCs were performed on days 0, 8, and 16. On the final day of experimentation, all sample thalli were photographed.

### **Calculations and Statistical Analysis:**

Two indices were developed to quantify the growth of algal apical tips. “Tip Score” is a measure of a sample’s apical tip number in reference to its mass. “Tip Index” is a measure of the production of new apical tips normalized to initial tip number. These parameters were calculated as follows:

Tip Score= (# of live apical tips / wet mass)

Tip Index= ((final # of live apical tips - initial # of live apical tips) / initial # of live apical tips) x 100

Raw PAM data was imported using WinControl software (Walz GmbH, Effeltrich, Germany). Yield values below 0.1 were not used in analysis as ETR may be underestimated below this critical value (Beer and Axelsson 2004). PAM-RLC parameters ( $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$ ,  $\alpha$ ) were calculated by nonlinear regression curves using SigmaPlot (version 11, Systat Inc.) software. Empirical data were fitted to a double exponential decay function as suggested by Ralph and Gademann (2005) in the absence of photoinhibition. A measure of the minimum saturating irradiance ( $E_k$ ) was calculated by dividing  $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$  by  $\alpha$ .

Growth rates were calculated as percent growth per day  $\left(\frac{\text{final wet mass} - \text{initial wet mass}}{\text{initial wet mass}} / 16 \text{ days}\right) \times 100$ . Fisher's ANOVA, Tukey's post-hoc comparisons and quadratic regressions were conducted using SPSS software (SPSS Inc.) if the distribution of parameter data was normal and homoscedastic. Welch's ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons were performed using SPSS software (SPSS Inc.) if the distribution of parameter data was normal and heteroscedastic. Non-parametric one-way Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA on ranks, Tukey's post-hoc comparisons on ranks, and Spearman rank order correlations were performed on ranked data using SigmaPlot software (Systat Inc.) if the assumption of normality was violated, but distributions were of similar shape. A value of  $\alpha = 0.05$  was retained as the probability of a type I error for all statistical tests.

## **Results:**

### **Trial 1 and 2 Pooled Data**

#### **Growth Rate:**

A maximal mean growth rate of  $3.01 \% d^{-1}$  was observed in the 27 ‰ treatment, which is ~ 3 fold greater than the 35 ‰ ( $1.11 \% d^{-1}$ ) or 11 ‰ ( $1.35 \% d^{-1}$ ) treatments (Table 2.1). A quadratic trend was observed between SGD treatment (independent variable) and growth rate and a significant regression was calculated ( $R^2=0.39$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Figure 2.2). Welch's ANOVA analysis detected significant differences among treatments ( $F=30.827$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Table 2.2). Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons confirmed the mean growth rate for both 19 ‰ ( $2.23 \% d^{-1}$ ) and 27 ‰ treatments was significantly greater than the 35 ‰ treatment ( $P=0.000$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Table 2.3). The mean growth rate of

27 ‰ treatment was also determined to be significantly greater than the 19 ‰ treatment ( $P=0.008$ , Table 2.3). At low salinity and high nutrients, many samples became visually bleached after only four days and gradually lost mass. However, some thalli recovered and grew at rates approaching other treatments. Although changes in sample mass would indicate thalli in the 11 ‰ treatment were growing nearly as rapidly as other treatments, 45 % of samples in the 11 ‰ treatment experienced negative growth by day eight. By day 16, more than half of samples were experiencing negative growth and sections of the thalli were visibly bleached.

#### **Apical Tip Development:**

Both measures of apical tip development produced a curve very similar in shape to the quadratic function of percent daily growth rate vs. SGD treatment. Major increases in apical tip development were evident after day eight in treatments 19 ‰ and 27 ‰. New apical tips commonly grew from existing tips while others appeared randomly along the thalli axes. New apical tip development was uncommon in treatments 35 ‰ and 11 ‰; the 11 ‰ treatment began to show signs of thalli bleaching after four days. By day eight, 83 % of samples in the 11 ‰ treatment had evidence of bleaching and a decrease in the total number of live apical tips from initial values.

## **Tip Score**

Prior to experimentation, Tip Scores of samples ranged from 50 to 100; no significant difference was detected among treatments ( $F=0.626$ ,  $P=0.602$ ). A maximal mean Tip Score of 117.56 was observed in the 27 ‰ treatment (Table 2.4) and one-way Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA analysis detected significant differences among treatments ( $H=31.494$ ,  $P<0.001$ ; Table 2.5). Tukey's post-hoc comparisons on ranks found significant differences between the 11 ‰ treatment and both 27 ‰ and 19 ‰ treatments (Table 2.6). By day 16, 100 % of samples in the 11 ‰ treatment experienced a decrease in Tip Score from initial values. The shape of the Tip Score vs. SGD treatment curve displays a similar quadratic trend to the growth rate curve (Figure 2.3) and a significant regression was calculated ( $R^2=0.62$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Figure 2.3). Tip Score increases from a minimum at 11 ‰ to a maximum value at 27 ‰ and then declines in the 35 ‰ treatment. A small but significant quadratic regression ( $R^2=0.32$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Figure 2.4) was found between Tip Score (independent variable) and percent growth per day (dependant variable).

## **Tip Index**

A maximal mean Tip Index of 132.70 was observed in the 27 ‰ treatment (Table 2.7) and one-way Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA analysis detected significant differences among treatments ( $H=32.720$ ,  $P<0.001$ ; Table 2.8). Tukey's post-hoc comparisons on ranks found significant differences between the 27 ‰ treatment and both 35 and 11 ‰ treatments (Table 2.9). Significant differences were also detected between the 19 and 11 ‰ treatments. By day 16, 91 % of samples in the 11 ‰ treatment experienced apical tip

necrosis and thus had a negative value for Tip Index. Figure 2.5 displays a quadratic trend as Tip Index increases from a negative value at 11 ‰ to a maximum value at 27 ‰ and then declines in the 35 ‰ treatment. A Spearman Rank Order correlation indicated a significant linear relationship ( $R = 0.59$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) between Tip Index and percent growth per day (Figure 2.6).

### **Trial Two Data**

#### **Growth Rate:**

A maximal mean daily growth rate of  $2.82\% \text{ d}^{-1}$  was observed in the 27 ‰ treatment during trial two (Table 2.10). Fisher's ANOVA detected significant differences among treatments ( $F = 6.610$ ,  $P = 0.003$ ; Table 2.11). Tukey's poc-hoc comparisons concluded that both 27 and 19 ‰ ( $2.45\% \text{ d}^{-1}$ ) treatments had a greater mean growth rate than the control 35 ‰ ( $1.10\% \text{ d}^{-1}$ ) treatment ( $P = 0.003$ ,  $P = 0.023$ ; Table 2.12). A quadratic trend is evident for the growth rate vs. SGD treatment curve and a significant regression was calculated ( $R^2 = 0.46$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ; Figure 2.7). By day eight, almost all thalli the 11 ‰ treatment showed signs of bleaching; two of the six samples also decreased in mass. At the end of the experiment, almost all samples in the 11 ‰ treatment were experiencing negative growth.

#### **PAM Measurements and Calculated Parameters:**

Figure 2.8 shows a representative rapid light curve (RLC) with non-linear regression lines fitted to mean ETR at a given irradiance for each treatment. The RLC of the 27 ‰ treatment displays higher mean ETR values at nearly every irradiance level

than all other treatments. The RLC for the 19 ‰ treatment lies below that of both 27 and 35 ‰ treatments.

The parameters  $ETR_{max}$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $E_k$  were calculated for each sample thallus by non-linear regression (all  $R^2 > 0.99$ ). A quadratic trend similar was evident for  $ETR_{max}$  vs. SGD treatment and a significant regression was calculated ( $R^2=0.49$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Figure 2.9). A maximal mean  $ETR_{max}$  of  $44.72 \mu\text{mol e}^- \text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  was calculated for the 27 ‰ treatment (Table 2.13). Fisher's ANOVA analysis of  $ETR_{max}$  confirms that significant differences exist among treatments ( $F= 25.73$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Table 2.14). Tukey's post-hoc comparisons reveal that the 27 ‰ treatment had a significantly higher mean  $ETR_{max}$  than all other treatments. Samples in the 35 ‰ treatment had a significantly higher mean  $ETR_{max}$  than both 19 and 11 ‰ treatments ( $p=0.025$ ,  $P=0.004$ ; Table 2.15).

The slope of the light limited part of the RLC ( $\alpha$ ) did not have as clear a relationship with SGD treatments as seen with other parameters (Figure 2.10). A maximal mean  $\alpha$  of  $0.274 (\mu\text{mol e}^- \text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}) (\mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1})^{-1}$  was observed in the 27 ‰ treatment and was slightly higher than the 35 ‰ control treatment (mean= 0.238, Table 2.16). A minimum  $\alpha$  (mean=0.213) was observed calculated for the 19 ‰ treatment (Table 2.16). Fisher's ANOVA analysis was not able to detect significant differences among treatments ( $F=2.601$ ,  $P=0.081$ ; Table 2.17)

Figure 2.11 shows the quadratic trend was retained for the  $E_k$  vs. SGD treatment and a significant regression was calculated ( $R^2=0.49$ ,  $P=0.00$ ). A maximal mean  $E_k$  value of  $165.95 \mu\text{mol photon meter}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1} \text{PAR}$  was calculated for the 27 ‰ treatment (Table 2.18) and Fisher's ANOVA analysis indicates significant differences among treatments ( $F=25.48$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Table 2.19). Tukey's post-hoc comparisons reveal the

mean  $E_k$  of 27 ‰ treatment is significantly greater than all other treatments (Table 2.20). The mean  $E_k$  value of the 35 ‰ treatment ( $124.08 \mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1} \text{ PAR}$ ) is significantly greater than both 19 and 11‰ treatments ( $P=0.009$ ,  $P=0.000$ ; Table 2.20). While the curve of the parameters  $\text{ETR}_{\text{max}}$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $E_k$  appear similar to that of growth rate vs. SGD treatment, no statistical relationship was detected between growth rate and these parameters.

### **Discussion:**

Almost three decades after Johannes's benchmark review (1980) suggested that SGD deserves more attention from marine ecologists, little evidence of a relationship between SGD and coastal biological processes has been published. Numerous studies have been successful at measuring the quality and quantity of SGD in coastal waters. Fewer studies have reported correlative evidence or even suggested terrestrial groundwater may play a role in marine productivity. The diffuse, large-scale nature of SGD presents a major challenge to scientists seeking to establish a causal relationship via *in situ* manipulative experiments. This study was undertaken to measure the physiological effects of simulated SGD on a coastal marine alga in a controlled laboratory setting. Our results support the hypothesis that moderate levels of simulated SGD increase the growth rate, apical tip development, and photosynthetic performance of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* compared to ambient controls.

The results of this study display a quadratic trend for the mean of all variables when plotted against simulated SGD treatment (increasing salinity, decreasing nutrients). Significant regression relationships indicate simulated SGD levels can predict growth



rate, Tip Score,  $ETR_{max}$ , and  $E_k$ . This trend and statistical analysis identify the simulated 27 ‰ SGD treatment (27 ‰ salinity, 7.51  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 0.15  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate) as an optimal combination of salinity and nutrients for *Gracilaria coronopifolia* within this study. When compared to controls, this treatment had greater mean values in every parameter measured (significance was detected in four of six parameters). A maximal mean growth rate for *G. coronopifolia* of  $\sim 3\% \text{ d}^{-1}$  was observed in the 27 ‰ SGD treatment. This 3-fold increase in growth rate compared to controls was concurrent with increased apical tip development. Maximal mean values in both Tip Score and Tip Index were observed in the 27 ‰ treatment. Maximal mean values for  $ETR_{max}$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $E_k$  were also observed in the 27 ‰ treatment. This suggests that these samples had a greater maximum rate of electron transport, were able to use low irradiance more efficiently and required higher irradiance to saturate electron flow than samples in other treatments; this combination of performance traits suggests a physiological state that is more than just a sun/ shade acclimation but rather an elevated nutritional status over plants in other treatments. The mean  $ETR_{max}$  and  $\alpha$  of samples in the 27 ‰ treatment were generally higher than values reported for 12 marine rhodophytes from southern Chile (Gomez et al. 2004).

The effect of changes in salinity on the productivity of osmotically adjusted marine algae commonly involves a transient increase in respiration and a stimulation or inhibition of photosynthesis (Kirst 1990). Reduced salinity has been shown to decrease photosynthesis in several marine algae (Otaga and Matsui 1965; Koch and Lawrence 1987; Simon et al. 1999; Wong and Chang 2000). Gessner and Schramm (1971) report that decreases in photosynthetic rate is proportional to decreases in salinity. Munda and Kremer (1977) conclude that reduced salinity decreases photosynthesis but increases

respiration in *Fucus serratus* and *F. vesiculosus*. Lapointe (1984) finds a similar result for *Gracilaria tikvahiae*. However, a significant decrease in respiration is found in *Gracilaria cornea* in 20 ‰ salinity compared to 30 ‰ salinity. Maximal growth rate and photosynthetic capacity ( $P_{\max}$ ) of *Grateloupia filicina* is observed at 20 ‰ salinity but declines as salinity decreases (Wong and Chang 2000). Photosynthesis may decline in hypo-osmotic conditions due to loss of  $\text{Cl}^-$  ions (Gessner and Schramm 1971), the ex-osmosis of ionic photosynthetic co-factors (Lapointe et al. 1984), or reductions in biocarbonate ( $\text{HCO}_3^-$ ) concentrations (Imai et al. 1997). Elevated levels of nitrate ameliorate the negative effects of reduced salinity in some macroalgae. When cultured in water with high nitrate and 15 ‰ salinity, *Enteromorpha intestinalis* has the greatest biomass, lowest wet:dry biomass ratios, and greater tissue N and P than when grown in low levels of nitrate (Kamer and Fong 2001).

In this study, a significant reduction in photosynthesis as well as an increase in growth rate and apical tip development was measured in the 19 ‰ treatment compared to controls. The 19 ‰ treatment contained two-fold higher nitrate and phosphate concentrations than the 27 ‰ treatment and two orders of magnitude greater nutrients than controls. Because nitrate and phosphate are not likely to inhibit growth at these concentrations, the salinity of the 19 ‰ treatment may be limiting productivity. This hypothesis is supported by the results of photosynthetic parameters  $\text{ETR}_{\max}$  and  $E_k$ .

The low salinity and high nutrient concentrations of the 11 ‰ treatment is at or near the viability threshold for *G. coronopifolia*. Although some samples in this treatment were slowly dying, others were able to resist the initial shock and continue to gain mass at rates similar to other treatments. Elevated levels of nutrients in SGD may

mitigate the negative effects of reduced salinity in *G. coronopifolia* and other species of marine algae. Some species of algae may be able to persist and thrive in high nutrient, hypo-osmotic conditions if SGD rate exhibits periodic cycling (eg. tidal pumping) or variability. A fluctuating salinity regime mitigates negative effects of reduced salinity on *Enteromorpha intestinalis* (Kamer and Fong 2000). In Hawai'i, the invasive marine alga *Gracilaria salicornia* remains viable and able to photosynthesize after a one-week immersion in fresh water (0 ‰) (Smith et al. 2004). High rates of SGD may help promote the persistence and productivity of alien algae at sites where low salinity limits the distribution of less tolerant native species.

Salinity alone influences apical tip formation in macroalgae. The mean number of algal branches increases with decreasing salinity in *Grateloupia filicina* from of 35 to 15 ‰ (Zablackis 1987) and in an unknown species of *Gracilaria* from 34 to 18 ‰ salinity (Zablackis 1986). Increased branching is also observed in *Fucus vesiculosus* with decreasing salinity (Jordan and Vadas 1972). In this study, increases in Tip Score and Tip Index were observed in the 19 and 27 ‰ treatments compared to controls. Increased apical tip formation is clearly a morphological response of this species to hypo-salinity / nutrient combinations. Tip Score and Tip Index are simple but informative measures with a clear relationship to growth rate over varied levels of simulated SGD.

Similar to other species in the genus *Gracilaria*, *G. coronopifolia* was found to be a euryhaline species capable of growth over a wide range of nutrients and salinity. The maximal growth rate of  $\sim 3\% \text{ d}^{-1}$  observed in this study was within the range of reported growth rates for this species. A survey of *Gracilaria* research from 21 species and 33 studies show a mean growth rate of  $\sim 7\% \text{ d}^{-1}$  (SD=0.05; Table 1.1). Somewhat

surprisingly, no correlation between growth rate and the photosynthetic parameters  $ETR_{max}$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $E_k$  was detected. This is likely due to the relatively high rate of growth and poor photosynthetic performance of thalli in the 19 ‰ treatment. This result is contrary to other studies, which indicate PAM derived photosynthetic rate can be used as a proxy for growth. Smith et al. (2004) report a significant positive relationship between growth and  $ETR_{max}$  in *Gracilaria salicornia* ( $R^2 = 0.465$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) when grown in treatments of various temperatures and salinities and algicide. The results of this study indicate the relative level of simulated SGD flux can be used to predict growth rate, branching, and photosynthetic parameters in *G. coronopifolia*.

In summary, the volume and quality of SGD to the benthic environment is a function of complex interactions including local groundwater chemistry, hydraulic gradients, tidal cycles, wave regime, wind force, thermal gradients and sediment type (Burnett et al. 2003). The ability of an organism to tolerate fluctuating salinity regimes and store nutrients while maintaining optimal respiratory and photosynthetic performance is likely a key factor in the distribution and productivity of an alga. The interaction of abundant nutrients coupled with changes of osmotic pressure in algal thalli may change the morphology and increase the productivity of some species under optimal conditions. The results of this study suggest that moderate amounts of simulated SGD (27 ‰ salinity, 7.51  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate, 0.15  $\mu\text{M}$  phosphate) may increase the growth rate, apical tip development and photosynthetic performance of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* in an otherwise oligotrophic environment. It is likely that *G. coronopifolia* and other species of marine algae in coastal environments have adapted to the SGD driven hyposaline-high nutrient conditions as simulated in the 27 ‰ salinity treatment. The importance of this natural

source of nutrients may be greater in arid regions, such as the Kona Coast, Hawai‘i, where SGD is the only significant source of freshwater and nutrients to coastal environments.

The results of this study have important implications for coastal ecosystem and terrestrial groundwater management strategies. Anthropogenic additions of nutrients to groundwater are likely increase primary productivity in areas of SGD. Recent studies have suggested anthropogenic nutrients via SGD may play a role in the occurrence of invasive algae blooms and phase shifts (Herrera-Silveira 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 1998; Herrera-Silveira et al. 2002; Smith et al. 2005; Herrera-Silveira and Morales-Ojeda 2009). Historically, groundwater management strategies have not considered marine biological processes as a constraint when determining the rate of extraction from a coastal aquifer (Pongkijvorasin et al. 2008). As the demand for fresh water increases with the human population, particularly in coastal areas, terrestrial groundwater should be considered an important resource for terrestrial and marine organisms alike.

**Tables:**

**Pooled Growth Rate (% per day)**

**Table 2.1.** Descriptive statistics for pooled percent growth rate per day per treatment.

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Min	Max
11	12	1.35	1.484	1.83	-1.95	3.69
19	12	2.23	0.456	2.28	1.55	3.18
27	12	3.01	0.595	3.03	2.01	3.88
35	12	1.11	0.397	1.07	0.31	1.78

**Table 2.2.** Welch's ANOVA results for pooled percent growth rate per day (a) asymptotically distributed.

	F-Statistic(a)	df1	df2	P-value
Growth Rate	30.827	3	23.468	<b>0.000</b>

**Table 2.3.** Games-Howell test of pooled daily growth rate  
(\* indicates the mean difference is significant at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level.

(I) (%)	(J) (%)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	P-value	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Lower Bound
11	19	-0.89	0.45	-2.200	0.429	0.245
	27	-1.67(*)	0.46	-3.004	-0.332	<b>0.013</b>
	35	0.24	0.44	-1.068	1.547	0.948
19	11	0.89	0.45	-0.429	2.200	0.245
	27	-0.78(*)	0.22	-1.386	-0.178	<b>0.008</b>
	35	1.13(*)	0.17	0.640	1.611	<b>0.000</b>
27	11	1.67(*)	0.46	0.332	3.004	<b>0.013</b>
	19	0.78(*)	0.22	0.178	1.386	<b>0.008</b>
	35	1.90(*)	0.21	1.327	2.487	<b>0.000</b>
35	11	-0.24	0.44	-1.547	1.068	0.948
	19	-1.13(*)	0.17	-1.611	-0.640	<b>0.000</b>
	27	-1.90(*)	0.21	-2.487	-1.327	<b>0.000</b>

## Pooled Tip Score

**Table 2.4.** Descriptive statistics for pooled tip score per treatment.

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	12	31.04	21.404	28.93	0.00	79.95
19	12	110.33	32.708	101.04	81.12	189.91
27	12	117.56	35.669	99.57	85.11	178.61
35	12	79.14	15.348	74.27	58.05	99.94

**Table 2.5.** Pooled data tip score Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA on ranks test statistics.

	H-statistic	df	P-value
Tip Score	31.494	3	<0.001

**Table 2.6.** Tukey’s pairwise multiple comparison of ranked pooled data for tip score. (\*) Indicates the significance at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level. A result of “Do Not Test” occurs for a comparison when no significant difference is found between the two rank sums that enclose that comparison.

Treatment comparison	Difference of Ranks	Q-statistic	P<0.05
27ppt vs 11ppt(*)	333	6.866	Yes
27ppt vs 35ppt	157	3.237	No
27ppt vs 19ppt	6	0.124	Do Not Test
19ppt vs 11ppt(*)	327	6.743	Yes
19ppt vs 35ppt	151	3.114	Do Not Test
35ppt vs 11ppt	176	3.629	No

## Pooled Tip Index

**Table 2.7.** Descriptive statistics for pooled tip index per treatment.

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	12	-50.41	32.373	-53.85	-100.00	8.33
19	12	83.78	53.834	69.44	21.43	166.67
27	12	132.70	105.781	109.17	34.04	380.00
35	12	30.24	41.025	20.00	-20.00	115.38

**Table 2.8.** Pooled data tip index Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA on ranks test statistics.

	H-statistic	df	P-value
Tip Index	32.720	3	<0.001

**Table 2.9.** Tukey’s pairwise multiple comparison of ranked pooled data for Tip Index. (\*) Indicates the significance at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level. A result of “Do Not Test” occurs for a comparison when no significant difference is found between the two rank sums that enclose that comparison.

Treatment comparison	Difference of Ranks	Q-statistic	P<0.05
27ppt vs 11ppt(*)	357.0	7.361	Yes
27ppt vs 35ppt(*)	183.5	3.784	Yes
27ppt vs 19ppt	47.5	0.979	No
19ppt vs 11ppt(*)	309.5	6.382	Yes
19ppt vs 35ppt	136.0	2.804	No
35ppt vs 11ppt	173.5	3.578	No



### Trial Two Growth Rate (% per day)

**Table 2.10.** Trial two percent daily growth rate descriptive statistics per treatment.

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	6	1.67	1.188	1.91	0.57	3.69
19	6	2.45	0.433	2.50	1.89	3.18
27	6	2.82	0.667	2.73	2.01	3.85
35	6	1.10	0.369	1.05	0.71	1.78

**Table 2.11.** Trial two percent daily growth rate one-way Fisher's ANOVA statistics.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-statistic	P-value
Between Groups	55763.17	3	18587.72	24.492	<b>0.000</b>
Within Groups	33393.31	44	758.94		
Total	89156.48	47			

**Table 2.12.** Tukey's pairwise comparison of trial two daily percent growth rate. (\*) indicates significance at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

(I) (%)	(J) (%)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	P-value	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Lower Bound
11	19	-79.29(*)	11.25	-109.317	-49.259	0.286
	27	-86.52(*)	11.25	-116.551	-56.493	0.060
	35	-48.10(*)	11.25	-78.126	-18.068	0.551
19	11	79.29(*)	11.25	49.259	109.317	0.286
	27	-7.23	11.25	-37.263	22.795	0.821
	35	31.19(*)	11.25	1.162	61.220	<b>0.023</b>
27	11	86.52(*)	11.25	56.493	116.551	0.060
	19	7.23	11.25	-22.795	37.263	0.821
	35	38.43(*)	11.25	8.396	68.454	<b>0.003</b>
35	11	48.10(*)	11.25	18.068	78.126	0.551
	19	-31.19(*)	11.25	-61.220	-1.162	<b>0.023</b>
	27	-38.43(*)	11.25	-68.454	-8.396	<b>0.003</b>

## Trial Two ETR<sub>max</sub>

**Table 2.13.** Trial two ETR<sub>max</sub> rate descriptive statistics per treatment.  
The units of ETR<sub>max</sub> are  $\mu\text{mol e}^- \text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ .

Treatment (%)	n	Standard				
		Mean	Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	6	13.84	4.141	13.52	8.75	20.54
19	6	17.07	9.388	15.81	5.93	31.16
27	6	44.72	8.125	41.99	35.68	57.31
35	6	29.31	3.432	30.00	24.69	33.32

**Table 2.14.** Trial two ETR<sub>max</sub> Fisher's one-way ANOVA statistics.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-statistic	P-value
Between Groups	3532.97	3	1177.66	25.73	<b>0.000</b>
Within Groups	915.29	20	45.77		
Total	4448.26	23			

**Table 2.15.** Tukey's pairwise comparison of trial two ETR<sub>max</sub>.  
(\* ) indicates significance at alpha = 0.05.

(I) (%)	(J) (%)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		P-value
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Lower Bound
11	19	-3.23	3.91	-14.162	7.702	0.841
	27	-30.88(*)	3.91	-41.812	-19.948	<b>0.000</b>
	35	-15.48(*)	3.91	-26.411	-4.547	<b>0.004</b>
19	11	3.23	3.91	-7.702	14.162	0.841
	27	27.65(*)	3.91	-38.582	-16.718	<b>0.000</b>
	35	12.25(*)	3.91	-23.181	-1.317	<b>0.025</b>
27	11	-30.88(*)	3.91	19.948	41.812	<b>0.000</b>
	19	27.65(*)	3.91	16.718	38.582	<b>0.000</b>
	35	15.40(*)	3.91	4.468	26.332	<b>0.004</b>
35	11	-15.48(*)	3.91	4.547	26.411	<b>0.004</b>
	19	12.25(*)	3.91	1.317	23.181	<b>0.025</b>
	27	-15.48(*)	3.91	-26.332	-4.468	<b>0.004</b>

## Trial Two $\alpha$

**Table 2.16.** Trial two  $\alpha$  descriptive statistics per treatment. The units of alpha are  $(\mu\text{mol e}^- \text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}) (\mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1})^{-1}$ .

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	6	0.233	0.025	0.23	0.210	0.260
19	6	0.213	0.069	0.22	0.090	0.290
27	6	0.274	0.014	0.27	0.260	0.300
35	6	0.238	0.019	0.24	0.210	0.260

**Table 2.17.** Trial two  $\alpha$  one-way Fisher's ANOVA statistics.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-statistic	P-value
Between Groups	0.012	3	0.004	2.601	0.081
Within Groups	0.030	20	0.000		
Total	0.042	23			

## Trial Two E<sub>k</sub>

**Table 2.18.** Descriptive statistics for trial two E<sub>k</sub>. The units of E<sub>k</sub> are (μmol photon m<sup>-2</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>).

Treatment (%)	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
11	6	59.51	18.206	47.88	42.50	91.17
19	6	77.05	23.329	68.08	43.97	105.75
27	6	162.95	27.905	155.83	133.52	200.80
35	6	124.08	20.211	126.13	93.83	143.36

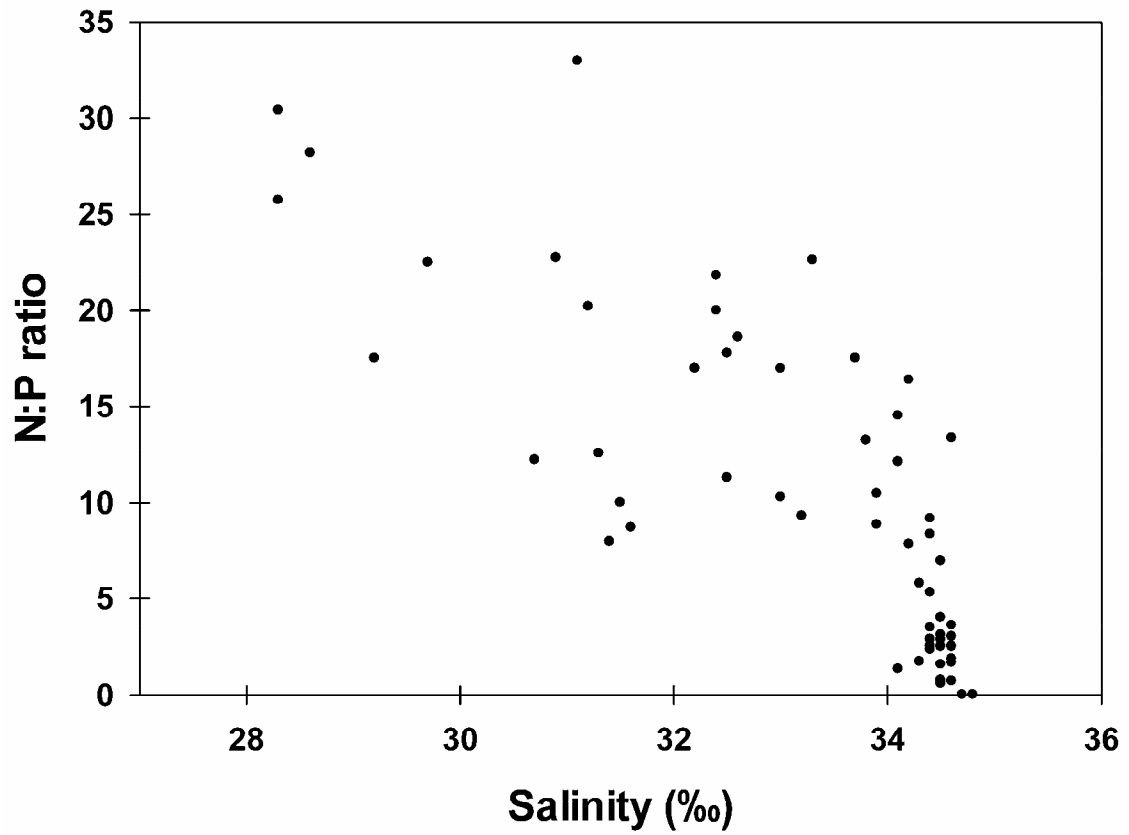
**Table 2.19.** Trial two E<sub>k</sub> one-way Fisher's ANOVA statistics.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-statistic	P-value
<b>Between Groups</b>	39415.88	3	13138.63	25.48	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Within Groups</b>	10314.30	20	515.72		
<b>Total</b>	49730.18	23			

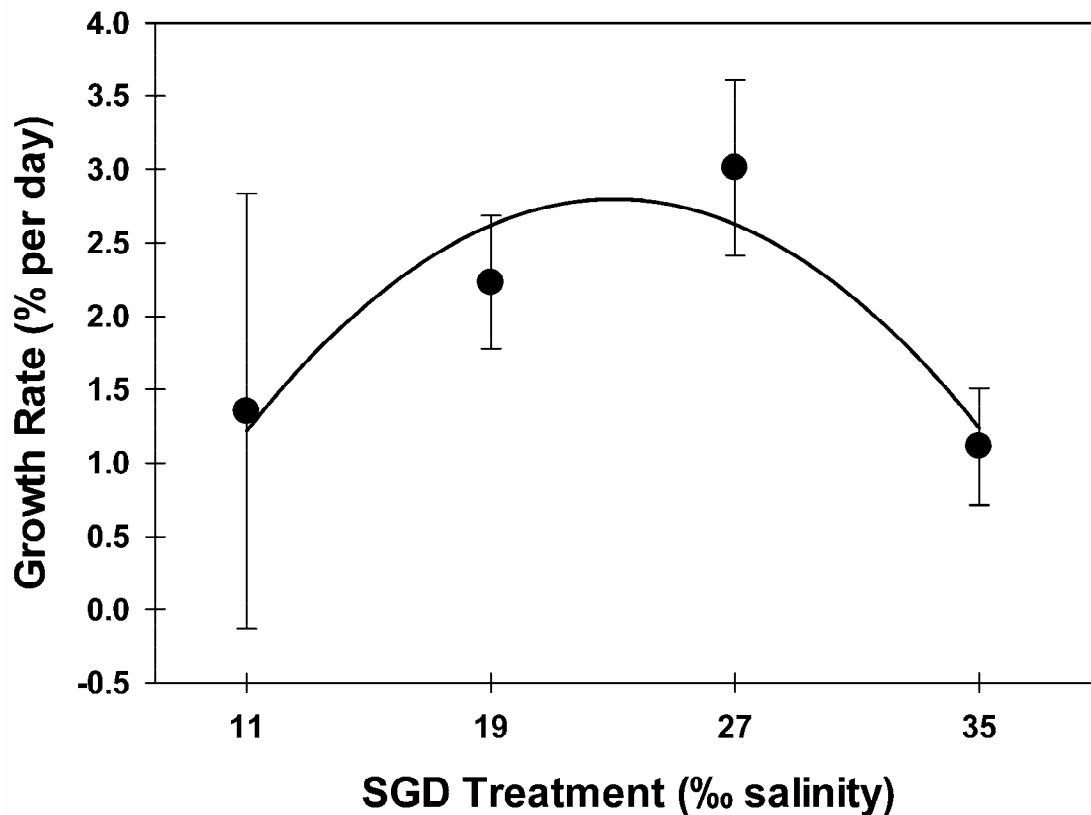
**Table 2.20.** Tukey's pairwise comparison of trial two E<sub>k</sub>. (\*) indicates significance at alpha = 0.05.

(I) (%)	(J) (%)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	P-value	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Lower Bound
<b>11</b>	19	-17.54	13.11	-54.235	19.161	0.551
	27	-103.44(*)	13.11	-140.135	-66.740	<b>0.000</b>
	35	-64.57(*)	13.11	-101.263	-27.868	<b>0.000</b>
<b>19</b>	11	17.54	13.11	-19.161	54.235	0.551
	27	-85.90(*)	13.11	-122.598	-49.203	<b>0.000</b>
	35	-47.03(*)	13.11	-83.726	-10.331	<b>0.009</b>
<b>27</b>	11	103.44(*)	13.11	66.740	140.135	<b>0.000</b>
	19	85.90(*)	13.11	49.203	122.598	<b>0.000</b>
	35	38.87(*)	13.11	2.174	75.569	<b>0.035</b>
<b>35</b>	11	64.57(*)	13.11	27.868	101.263	<b>0.000</b>
	19	47.03(*)	13.11	10.331	83.726	<b>0.009</b>
	27	-38.87(*)	13.11	-75.569	-2.174	<b>0.035</b>

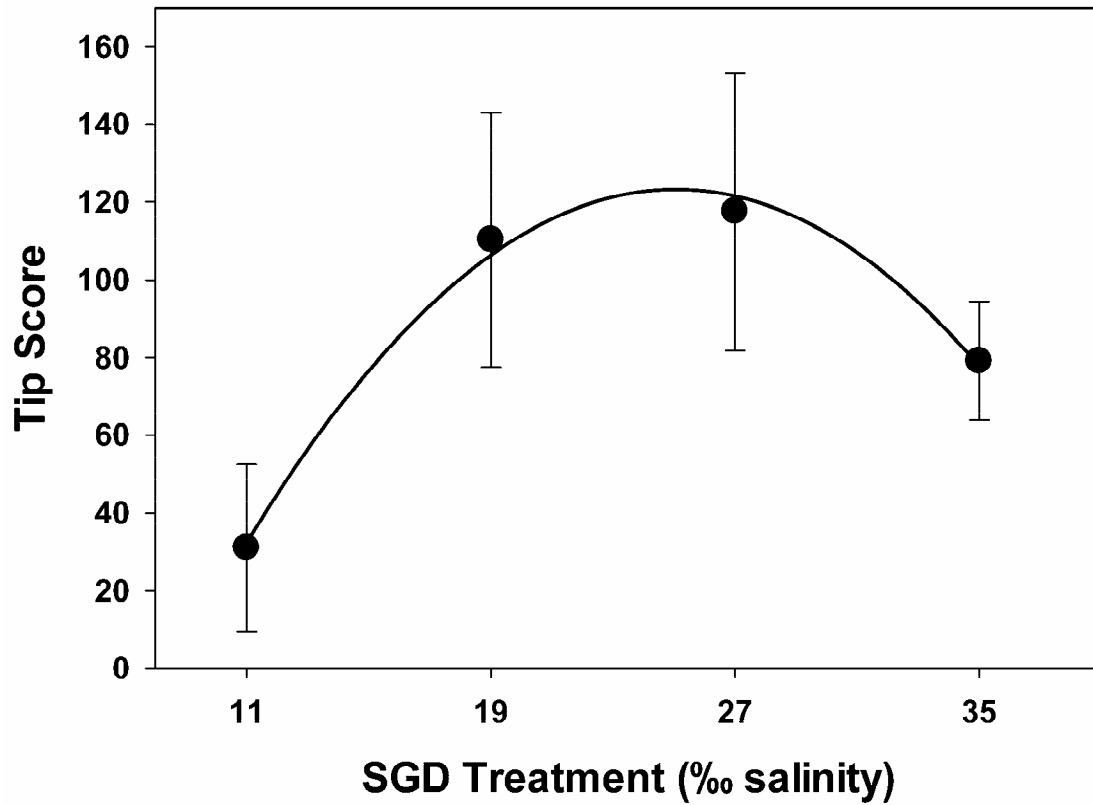
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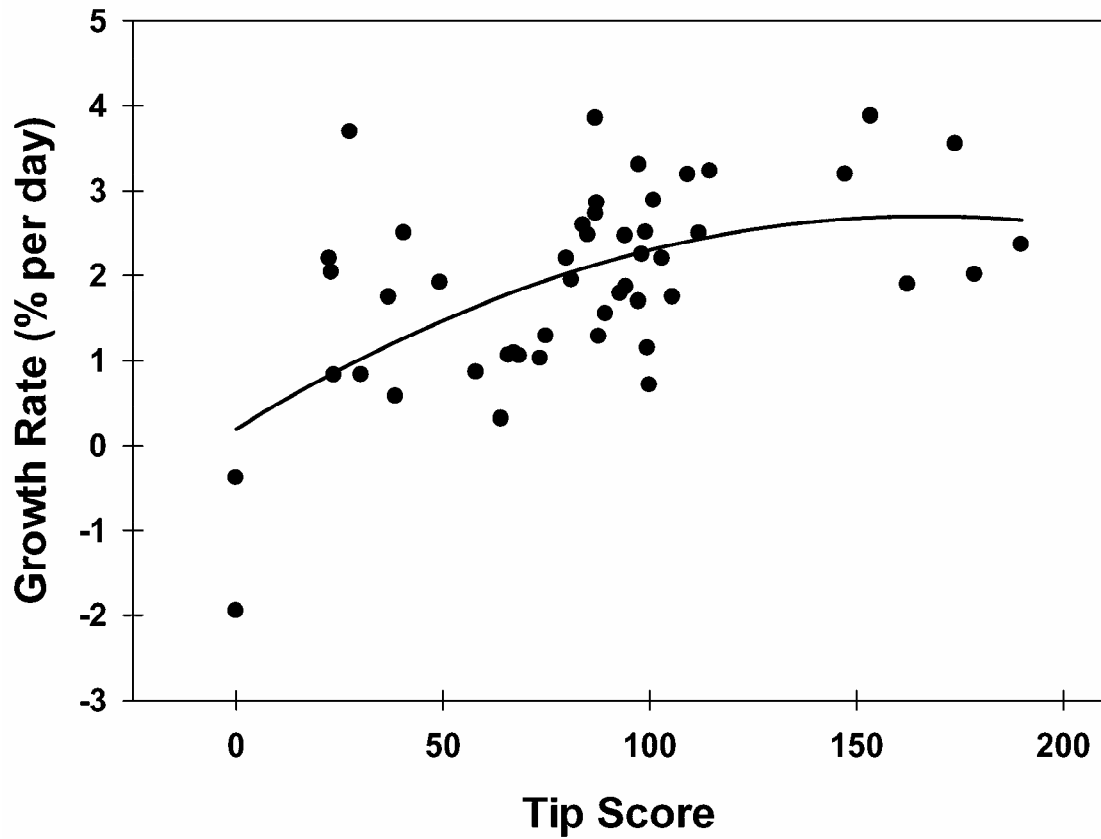
**Figure 2.1.** Scatter plot of N:P ratio vs. salinity from Kona, Hawai'i. N=62  
Raw data from Johnson et al. (2008)



**Figure 2.2.** Pooled mean growth rate (% per day) vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia*. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. The solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = -2.9923 + 0.5027(x) - 0.0109(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.39$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).

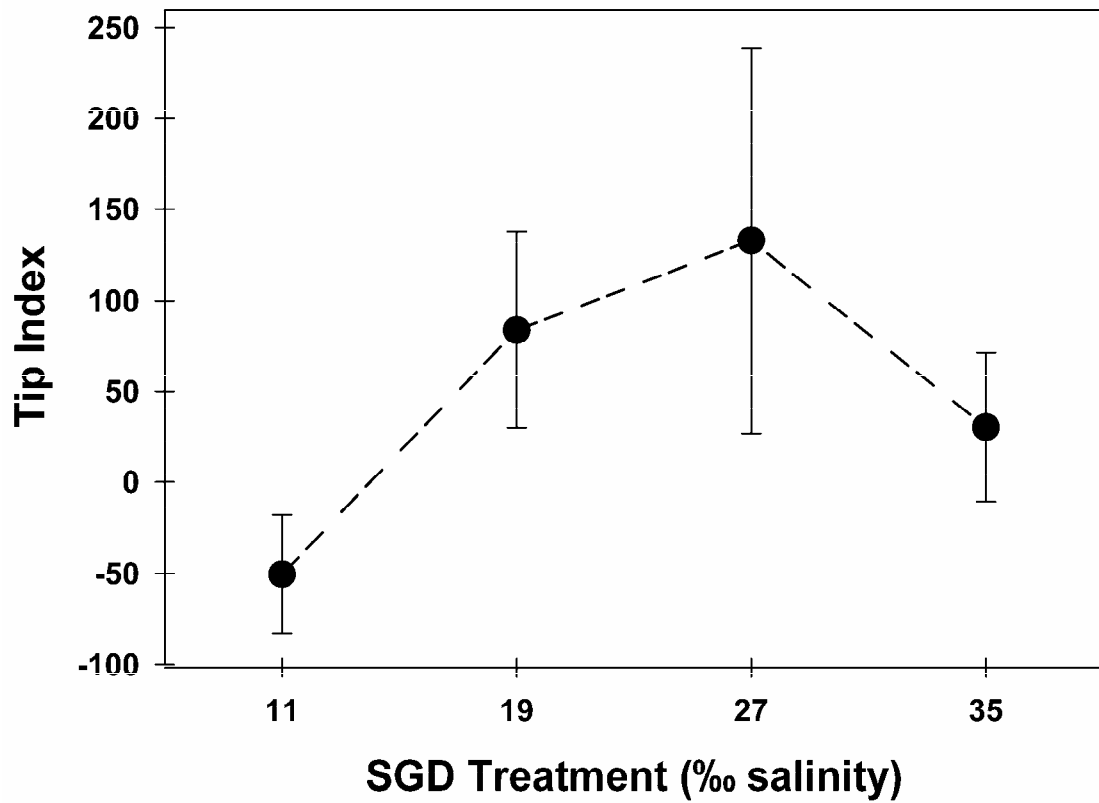


**Figure 2.3.** Pooled mean tip score vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia*. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. The solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = -165.5022 + 23.0457(x) - 0.4598(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.62$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).

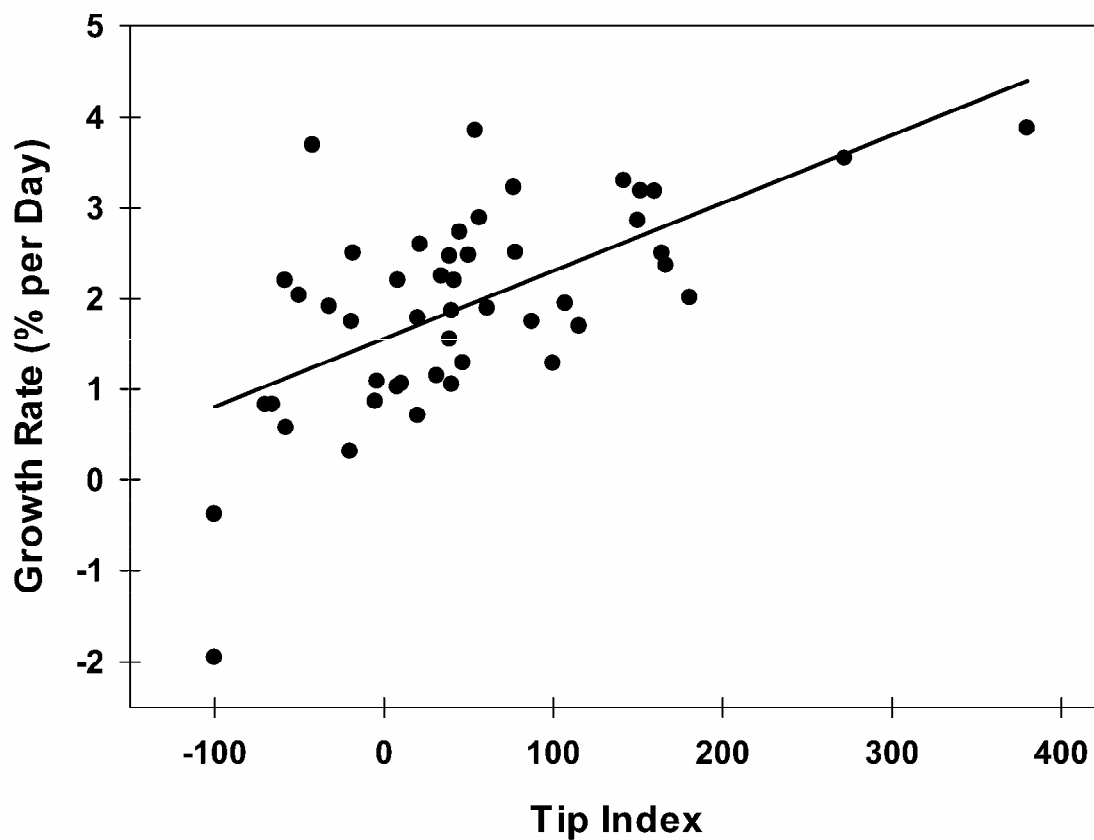


**Figure 2.4.** Pooled scatter plot of tip score vs. growth rate (% per day) for *Gracilaria coronopifolia* in all treatments. The solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = 0.1962 + 0.0300(x) - 8.9985E-5(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.32$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).

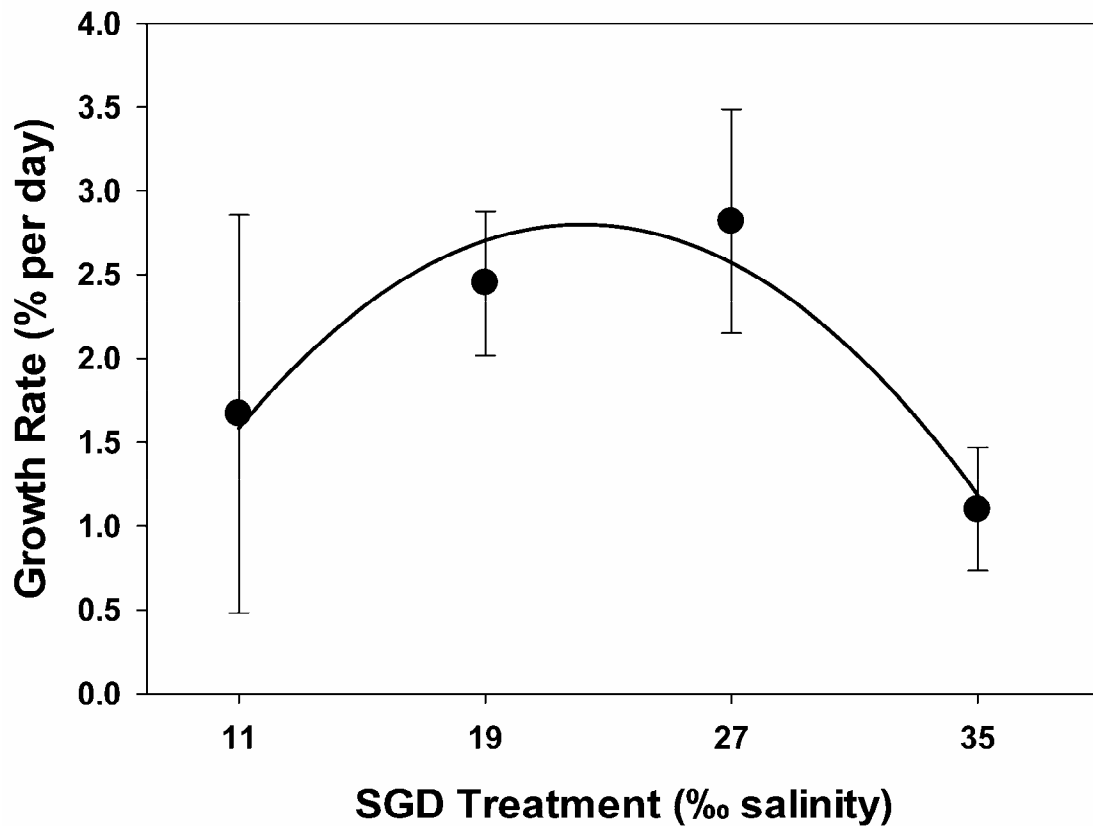




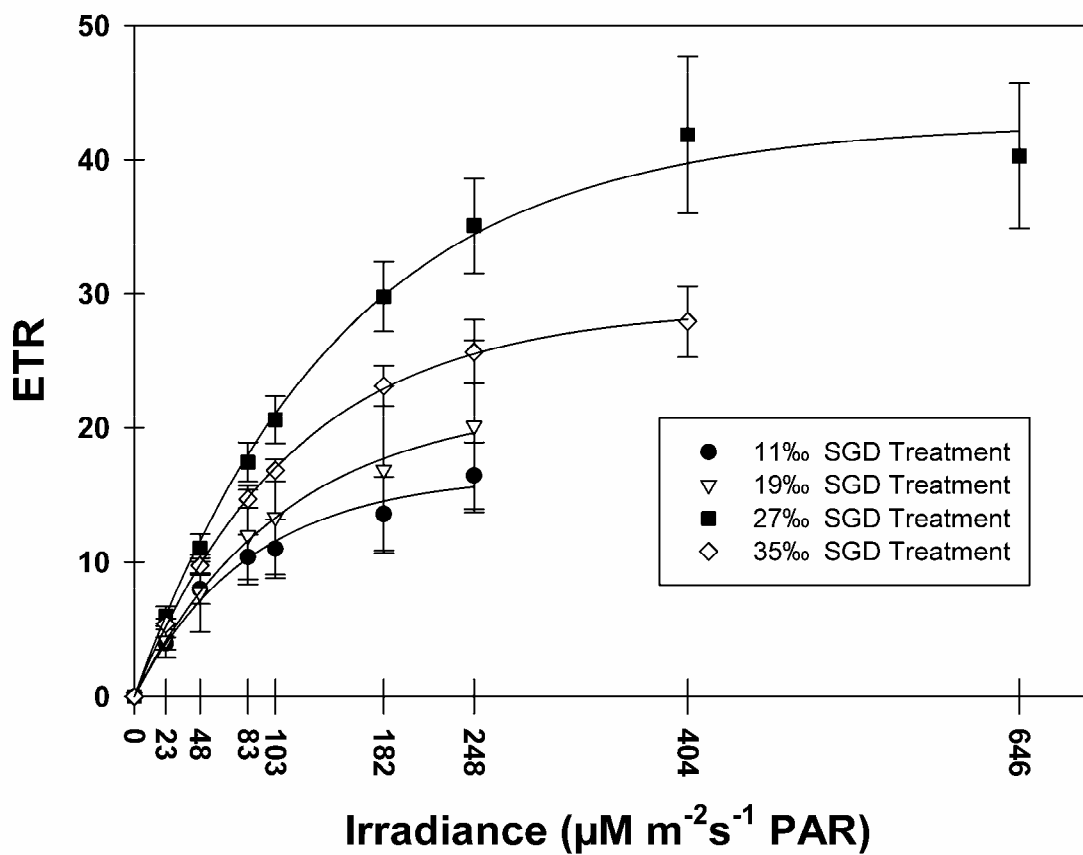
**Figure 2.5.** Pooled mean tip index vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia*. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. The broken line indicates the general trend.



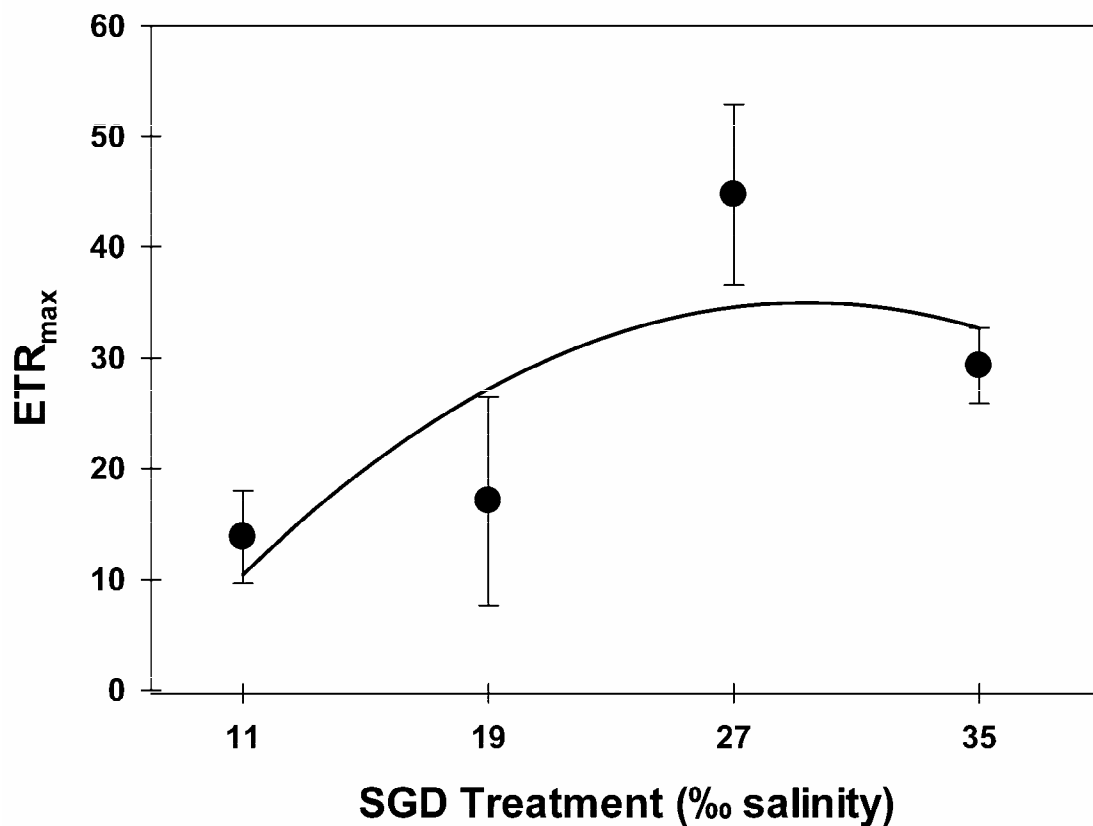
**Figure 2.6.** Pooled scatter plot of tip index vs. growth rate (% per day) of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* in all treatments. The solid line represents the best-fit linear line.



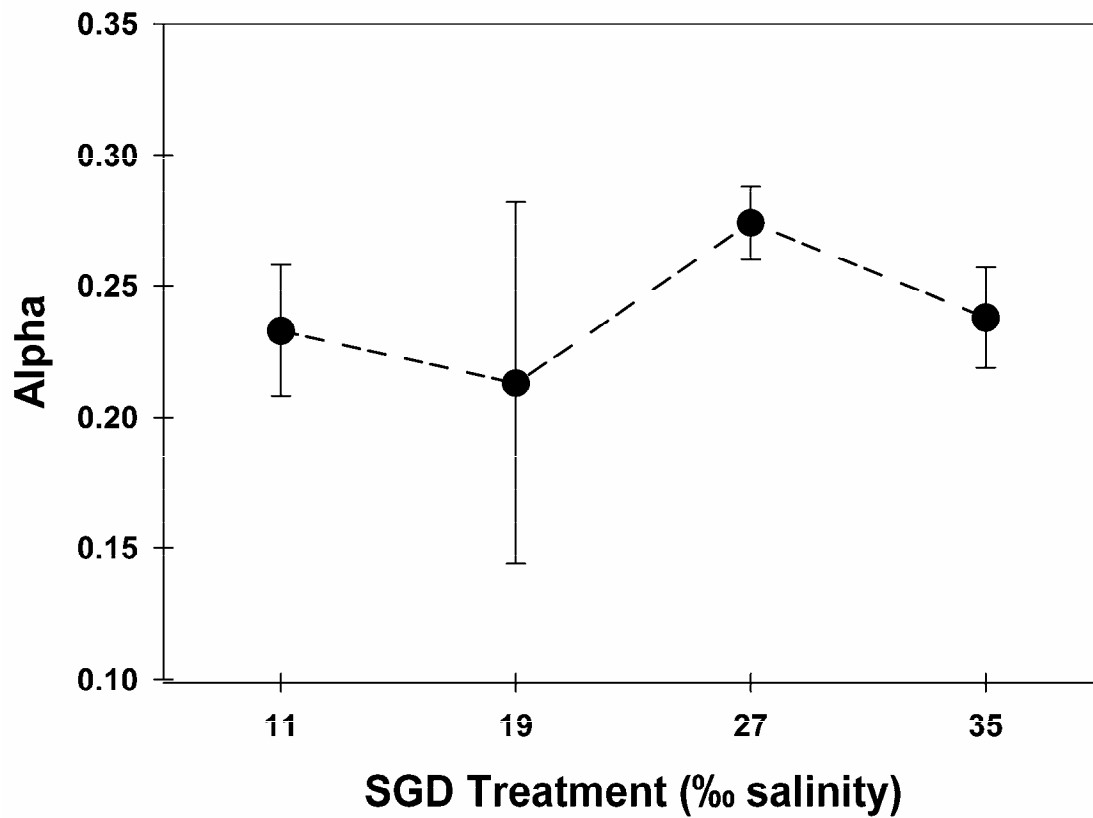
**Figure 2.7.** Mean growth rate (% per day) vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* in trial two. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. Solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = -1.9979 + 0.4335(x) - 0.0098(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.46$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).



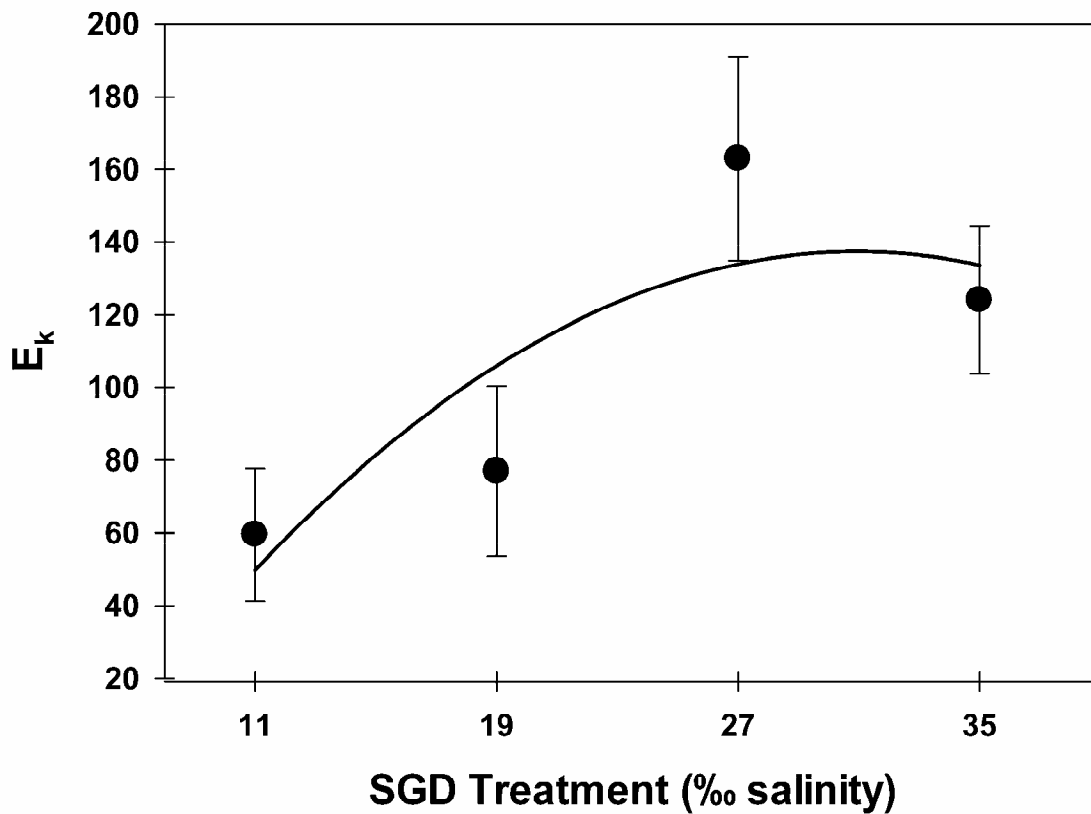
**Figure 2.8.** Rapid light curve (RLC) for replicates of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* in trial two. The mean ETR value of each treatment at given irradiance is shown. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. A non-linear regression line is fit to each treatment RLC ( $R^2 > 0.99$  for all samples).



**Figure 2.9.** Mean ETR<sub>max</sub> vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* for trial two. The units of ETR<sub>max</sub> are μmol e<sup>-</sup> m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>. Error bars indicate ± 1 standard deviation of the mean. Solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = -27.7433 + 4.2737(x) - 0.0728(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.49$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).



**Figure 2.10.** Mean alpha ( $\alpha$ ) vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* for trial two. The units of alpha are  $(\mu\text{mol e}^- \text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}) (\mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1})^{-1}$ . Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean.



**Figure 2.11.** Mean  $E_k$  vs. SGD treatment of *Gracilaria coronopifolia* for trial two. The units of  $E_k$  are  $\mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  PAR. Error bars indicate  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean. Solid line represents the best-fit line from quadratic regression ( $f = -73.4211 + 13.6310(x) - 0.2203(x)^2$ ;  $R^2 = 0.57$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ).

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