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Evaluating the stable isotopic composition of phosphate oxygen as a tracer of phosphorus from waste water treatment works

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

1 Evaluating the Stable Isotopic Composition of Phosphate Oxygen as a

2 Tracer of Phosphorus from Waste Water Treatment Works

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15 Abstract

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Eutrophication is a globally significant challenge facing freshwater ecosystems and is closely associated with anthropogenic enrichment of phosphorus (P) in the aquatic environment. Phosphorus inputs to rivers are usually dominated by diffuse sources related to farming activities and point sources such as waste water treatment works (WwTW). The limited availability of inherent labels for different P sources has constrained understanding of these triggers for eutrophication in natural systems. There have been substantial recent advances in the use of phosphate oxygen isotopes $(\delta^{18}O_{PO4})$ as a way of understanding phosphate sources and processing. Results from all previous studies of the $\delta^{18}O_{PO4}$ composition of WwTW effluent and septic tanks are combined together with significant new data from the UK to assess $\delta^{18}O_{PO4}$ compositions in waste water sources. The overall average $\delta^{18}O_{PO4}$ value is 13.9‰, ranging from 8.4 to 19.7‰. Values measured in the USA are much lower than those measured in Europe. A strong positive correlation exists between $\delta^{18}O_{PO4}$ and $\delta^{18}O_{PO4}$, suggesting biologically-mediated exchange between the water molecules and the phosphate

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