Counterpoints

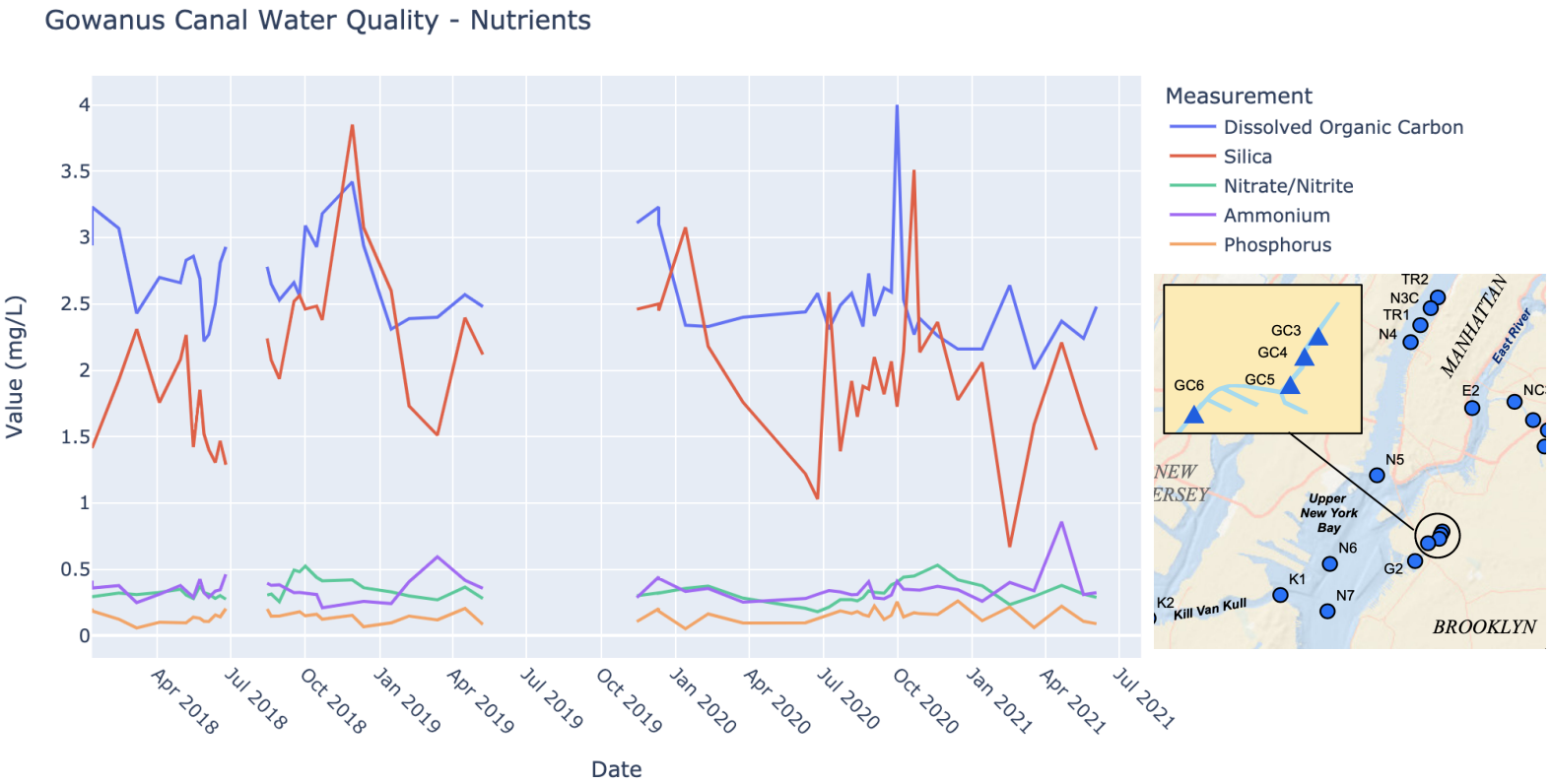
40°40'33"N 73°59'40"W
Gowanus Canal

Brooklyn’s beloved and bemoaned Gowanus Canal is known infamously for its greenish-brown, oily, smelly, and polluted water resulting from sewage and manufactured gas plants. The water in the canal is inhospitable to marine life (and may even be breeding new forms of life on its own!). Gowanus Canal was named a Superfund site in 2010 by the U.S. EPA, and an estimated $1.5 billion project is currently underway to dredge the canal of up to 20 feet of contaminated sediment that lines the bottom and cap the native sediment that lies underneath.

The below chart shows several measurements of water quality collected by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), as part of the agency's Harbor Survey Program. The Survey currently monitors 87 stations on a weekly basis from May to October and monthly thereafter. The measurements below are taken from monitoring station GC6, at the center and most polluted section of the Gowanus Canal.

Although the measurements below are within the acceptable ambient water quality criteria set for each nutrient/mineral (where applicable) by the EPA, these ranges are very wide and impact to aquatic life depends on factors such as water pH, temperature, reactivity with other pollutants, as well as each organism itself.

How can we express the simultaneous outward beauty and unseen horrors lurking in the depths of the Gowanus Canal? What physical, chemical, and spiritual rebalancing is necessary for the restoration of this water body and the surrounding communities?



Sources:

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