



Abstract Details

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Title: Submarine groundwater discharge as an important source of nutrients in Toyama Bay, central Japan

Abstract:

The discharge of freshwater from the seafloor of the continental shelf has been recognized as an important, direct transport pathway for water and other materials between the groundwater system of the adjacent land and the marine environment. This submarine groundwater discharge (SGD) is possibly more important than its contribution to the water balance alone would suggest, because at first the concentration of dissolved materials in groundwater is greater than that of river water, and furthermore much riverine dissolved material is removed by colloids in the estuary region. The purpose of this study is to clarify, by using geochemical techniques, the circulation of SGD including its discharge mechanisms, spatio-temporal variability, and impact on the coastal marine ecosystem. Conclusions are based on a case study of the Toyama Bay in central Japan. A new technique enables for the first time the collection of a large amount of SGD water within a depth range 5 m to 33 m without contamination from the surrounding seawater. Based on hydrogen and oxygen isotope composition, the SGD samples are found to originate from nearby mountain precipitation within the altitude range 800 m to 1200 m. From geographic/geologic conditions and tritium data, it is deduced that the SGD flowed through a buried ancient river bed and emerged from the sea floor 10 to 20 years after having entered the underground mountain aquifer. With almost no primary removal, nutrients in the SGD mix upward into the euphotic zone. In summer, nutrients are especially low in middle water depths (5 to 40 m depth) because of seawater stratification. However, only near SGD are relative high chlorophyll concentrations observed at this nutrient exhausting zone, which possibly is interpreted as an origination in the nutrient delivering by SGD. Compared to the riverine flux, the SGD supplies up to 80% of the phosphates and 60% of the nitrates to the coastal marine ecosystem, even though SGD volume flux is only 30% of the river runoff. Because SGD provides a direct pathway between land and ocean for both natural and anthropogenic dissolved materials, it becomes an urgent task to clarify the role of SGDs in transporting pollutants of anthropogenic origin.

Presentation Mode:

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