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DOI:

[10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.157652](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.157652)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Jantharadej, K., Kongprajug, A., Mhuantong, W., Limpiyakorn, T., Suwannasilp, B. B., Mongkolsuk, S., & Sirikanchana, K. (2022). Comparative genomic analyses of pathogenic bacteria and viruses and antimicrobial resistance genes in an urban transportation canal. *Science of the Total Environment*, 848, 157652. [157652]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.157652>

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1 **This is the Author's Accepted Manuscript version of the article: Jantharadej,**
2 **K., Kongprajug, A., Mhuantong, W., Limpiyakorn, T., Suwannasilp, B. B.,**
3 **Mongkolsuk, S., & Sirikanchana, K. (2022). Comparative genomic analyses of**
4 **pathogenic bacteria and viruses and antimicrobial resistance genes in an**
5 **urban transportation canal. Science of The Total Environment, 848, 157652.**
6 **Accepted for publication on 22 July 2022.**

7

8 **Comparative genomic analyses of pathogenic bacteria and viruses and**
9 **antimicrobial resistance genes in an urban transportation canal**

10

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29 **Abstract**

30 Water commuting is a major urban transportation method in Thailand. However, urban boat
31 commuters risk exposure to microbially contaminated bioaerosols or splash. We aimed to
32 investigate the microbial community structures, identify bacterial and viral pathogens, and assess
33 the abundance of antimicrobial resistance genes (ARGs) using next-generation sequencing
34 (NGS) at 10 sampling sites along an 18 km transportation boat route in the Saen Saep Canal,,
35 which traverses cultural, commercial, and suburban land-based zones. The shotgun metagenomic
36 (Illumina HiSeq) and 16s rRNA gene amplicon (V4 region) (Illumina MiSeq) sequencing
37 platforms revealed diverse microbial clusters aligned with the zones, with explicit segregation
38 between the cultural and suburban sites. The shotgun metagenomic sequencing further identified
39 bacterial and viral pathogens, and ARGs. The predominant bacterial pathogens (>0.5% relative
40 abundance) were the *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, *Arcobacter butzleri*, *Burkholderia*
41 *vietnamiensis*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and the *Enterobacter cloacae* complex. The viruses
42 (0.28%–0.67% abundance in all microbial sequences) comprised mainly vertebrate viruses and
43 bacteriophages, with encephalomyocarditis virus (33.3%–58.2% abundance in viral sequences),

44 hepatitis C virus genotype 1, human alphaherpesvirus 1, and human betaherpesvirus 6A among
45 the human viral pathogens. The 15 ARG types contained 611 ARG subtypes, including those
46 resistant to beta-lactam, which was the most diverse and abundant group (206 subtypes; 17.0%–
47 27.5%), aminoglycoside (94 subtypes; 9.6%–15.3%), tetracycline (80 subtypes; 15.6%–20.2%),
48 and macrolide (79 subtypes; 14.5%–32.1%). Interestingly, the abundance of ARGs associated
49 with resistance to beta-lactam, trimethoprim, and sulphonamide, as well as *A. butzleri* and
50 crAssphage, at the cultural sites was significantly different from the other sites ($p < 0.05$). We
51 demonstrated the benefits of using NGS to deliver insights into microbial communities, and
52 antimicrobial resistance, both of which pose a risk to human health. Using NGS may facilitate
53 microbial risk mitigation and management for urban water commuters and proximal residents.

54

55 **KEYWORDS:** freshwater, virus, bacteria, crAssphage, microbial diversity, antibiotic resistance

56

57 **1. Introduction**

58 Urban canal networks facilitate transportation, flood protection, agriculture, waste management,
59 and human health and well-being (Anceno et al., 2007; Völker and Kistemann, 2011). Notably,
60 inland water transportation has been an integral part of economic development and society in
61 many countries as it is a component of human mobility, tourism, and leisure travel, as well as the
62 transportation of commercial, agricultural and industrial goods and products (Cheemakurthy et
63 al., 2017; Jurkovic et al., 2021; Tanko and Burke, 2017). Inland water transport has been
64 promoted for its sustainability features and eco-friendliness in modern smart cities as an option
65 to avoid land-based transit congestion at an economical cost (Iamtrakul et al., 2018; United
66 Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2011). Urban ferry and boat transits serve

67 commuters and passengers via large-scale transit networks such as those in Amsterdam,
68 Brisbane, Hong Kong, and Istanbul, medium-scale transits such as those in Copenhagen,
69 Gothenburg, and Hamburg, and small-scale services such as those in Boston, Oslo, and
70 Rotterdam (Cheemakurthy et al., 2017). Remarkably, such services transported over 70 million
71 passengers in Bangkok in 2019 (Marine Department of Thailand, 2020).

72

73 Notwithstanding, many populated urban waterways have microbial pollution problems
74 associated with human sewage contamination (Amin et al., 2020; Shahin et al., 2021;
75 Sirikanchana et al., 2014; Wangkahad et al., 2015; World Health Organization [WHO], 2018).
76 Boat passengers are thus at risk of being exposed to microbially contaminated bioaerosols or
77 splash (Ginn et al., 2021; Pringsulaka et al., 2017). In addition to pathogenic organisms,
78 antibiotic-resistant bacteria (ARB) and antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) have emerged as
79 waterborne microbial pollutants that pose a risk to human health (Amarasiri et al., 2020;
80 Verhougstraete et al., 2020). Preventive and curative treatments of ARB-infected patients are
81 immensely difficult. ARBs thus cause increased human illness and death as well as higher
82 treatment costs and longer treatment duration (WHO, 2015). Moreover, antibiotic resistance
83 acquisition of natural bacteria can be promoted via the horizontal gene transfer of ARGs through
84 transformation (free DNA uptake), conjugation (gene transfer from another bacteria), and
85 transduction (genes carried by bacteriophages) (Amarasiri et al., 2020). A number of studies
86 have shown that a polluted surface water acts as an environmental reservoir for ARBs and ARGs
87 contaminated by wastewater sources and stormwater pollution (Karkman et al., 2019; Lee et al.,
88 2020; Makkaew et al., 2021; Stange et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2021). A health approach that
89 takes into account the interlinkage of the human, animal, and environmental sectors has been

90 emphasized to tackle the problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) (Booton et al., 2021;
91 European Commission, 2017; WHO, 2015), and AMR-related topics pertaining to water and the
92 environment have been a research focus over the last two decades (Luz et al., 2022). It has also
93 been shown that environmental characteristics, such as high suspended solids and low dissolved
94 oxygen (DO) favor pathogen-related genera and ARGs (He et al., 2022; Ott et al., 2021), which
95 increase the risks to public health. However, information regarding microbial contamination,
96 including pathogenic bacteria and viruses, as well as emerging ARG contaminants in urban
97 transportation canals, is limited.

98

99 Next-generation sequencing (NGS) can be used to identify microbial communities from a wide
100 range of environments and provides a method by which to capture unculturable organisms and
101 determine the complex associations between such microorganisms in their natural environments
102 (Caporaso et al., 2012; Jin et al., 2018; Lapierre et al., 2019). Specifically, 16S rRNA gene
103 amplicon sequencing can elucidate bacterial and archaeal community structures, while shotgun
104 metagenomic sequencing is able to assign microbial species, as well as genes of interest, such as
105 viral communities and ARGs (Cui et al., 2019; Jantharadej et al., 2021; Ranjan et al., 2016).
106 Consequently, the objectives of this study were (1) to determine the structure and abundance of
107 the microbial communities in 10 transport canal locations in Thailand, (2) to investigate the
108 presence in canal waters of pathogenic bacteria and viruses and ARGs that could pose a risk to
109 human health, and (3) to examine the effects of designated land-based zoning on microbial and
110 ARG diversity. The results of this study may support the application of NGS by elucidating the
111 microbial health risks to boat commuters and proximal residents along polluted urban canals and
112 thus informing measures for microbial risk mitigation and management.

113

114 **2. Materials and methods**

115 *2.1 Site description and water sampling*

116 The 53.5-km Saen Saep Canal, which was constructed in 1840, connects Bangkok and
117 Chachoengsao Province, Thailand. Despite its deteriorating water quality and nuisance odors,
118 with a history of 10^4 – 10^8 CFU/100 mL of total coliforms (Department of Drainage and
119 Sewerage, 2011; Jantharadej et al., 2021; Pollution Control Department (PCD), 2018), the canal
120 serves as one of the main transportation routes for urban commuters, with an average of 70,709
121 people per day on weekdays and 40,283 people per day on weekends and national holidays in
122 2019 (Marine Department of Thailand, 2020). In this study, one-time sampling of canal water
123 samples were conducted from 10 sampling sites (sites A–J) along an 18 km transportation boat
124 route in the Saen Saep Canal, Bangkok (Fig. 1; Table S1). The sampling sites were located in
125 three zoning classifications from upstream to downstream, namely, cultural (sites A and B),
126 commercial (sites C–F), and suburban residential (sites G–J), with different land uses according
127 to the Department of City Planning, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (Table S2) (BMA,
128 2017). The cultural zone is located in the downtown area with its historical sightseeing
129 attractions and has a population density of 23,667 people per km² (BMA, 2017, 2018). The
130 commercial area comprises commercial buildings, shopping malls, condominiums, hospitals,
131 schools, and restaurants and has a population density of 5,434–10,097 people per km². The water
132 samples in both areas had a dark brown color and foul odor. The suburban residential area along
133 the canal serves a large number of residents and includes many facilities, such as villages,
134 condominiums, markets, informal settlements, and department stores. Its population density is
135 5,148 people per km². The water samples from this area had a dark green color and slightly foul
136 odor. One-liter water samples were collected at the passenger ports, which intrude 1–2 m into the

137 10 m wide canal. The samples were captured in sterile containers placed 30 cm below the water
138 surface in accordance with Thailand's standard protocol for microbiological sampling (National
139 Environment Board, 2017). The sample collection period was February 18–26, 2019, which
140 represented the dry season. The samples were transported on ice to the laboratory within 3 h of
141 collection. The physicochemical parameters, including the DO, conductivity, salinity, pH, and
142 temperature, were measured on site using portable meters (YSI Pro2030 and YSI 60, YSI Inc.,
143 USA). The water samples were stored at 4°C until further processing.

144

145 *2.2 Sample preparation and DNA extraction*

146 One liter of water was centrifuged at $4,300 \times g$ for 15 minutes at room temperature, and the pellet
147 was kept in a 2 mL sterile microcentrifuge tube. The supernatant was then pH-adjusted to 3.5
148 with 2N HCl and filtered through a 0.45 μm pore-size HAWP membrane (Merck Millipore,
149 USA) (A. Kongprajug et al., 2019). The filtered membrane and sediment pellet were combined
150 and the DNA extracted using a FastDNA SPIN kit for soil (MP Biomedicals, USA) in
151 accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The DNA quality was assessed using agarose
152 gel electrophoresis (2.0% agarose gel, 100V, 30 min), and the DNA concentrations were
153 determined using a NanoDrop ND-1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA).
154 The DNA samples were stored at -20°C until use.

155

156 *2.3 16S rRNA gene sequencing and bioinformatics*

157 We performed 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing (MiSeq, Illumina, USA) for the V4 region
158 using modified primers, namely, modified 515F (5'-GTGYCAGCMGCCGCGGTAA-3') and
159 806R (5'-GGACTACHVGGGTWTCTAAT-3'), which improved the coverage of the archaeal

160 and bacterial 16S rRNA genes (Ding et al., 2015). The 50 μ L PCR reaction was composed of
161 each of 1 μ M forward and reverse primers, 1.25 U Taq polymerase, 4 mM MgCl₂, 5 μ L of 10 \times
162 buffer (Fermentas, Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA), 0.2 μ M dNTPs, and 4 μ L DNA template.
163 The PCR reactions were run on a thermocycler (Bio-Rad, USA) using the following program: 3
164 min of denaturation at 95°C; 23 cycles of 30 s at 95°C, 30 s for annealing at 56°C, and 30 s for
165 elongation at 72°C; and a final extension at 72°C for 10 min. The resultant PCR products were
166 checked for quality on agarose gel electrophoresis (2.0% agarose gel, 100V, 30 min) and further
167 purified using AMPure XP beads (Beckman Coulter, USA) and indexed using 5 μ L Nextera XT
168 index primer in a 50 μ L PCR reaction by following eight cycles of the aforementioned PCR
169 cycling condition. Next, the purified amplicons were pooled in an equimolar proportion and
170 paired-end sequenced at a 6 pM final loading concentration into an Illumina MiSeq sequencer
171 (Illumina, USA) in accordance with the published protocol (Caporaso et al., 2012) at the Omics
172 Sciences and Bioinformatics Center (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand). For the data analysis,
173 the raw sequencing data in FASTQ format were processed to remove the PCR primer sequences.
174 Quantitative Insights Into Microbial Ecology 2 (QIIME 2; version 1.6.0) was used to analyze the
175 sequencing data (Bolyen et al., 2019). The DADA2 algorithm (version 1.10) as a QIIME 2
176 plugin was applied to merge and denoise the sequences (Callahan et al., 2016). All the amplicon
177 sequence variants (ASVs) with a frequency lower than 0.1% of the mean sample depth were
178 removed, and the rest were grouped into taxa using a naive Bayes approach, which was
179 implemented in the scikit-learn Python algorithms (Pedregosa et al., 2011). The representative
180 sequence of each ASV was used to perform a taxonomy using the SILVA database (Quast et al.,
181 2013).

182

183 *2.4 Shotgun sequencing and bioinformatics*

184 Sample DNA (100 ng) was subjected to sequencing library preparation using the QIAseq FX
185 DNA Library Kit (QIAGEN, Germany). Briefly, the DNA was fragmented using an enzymatic
186 reaction and cleaned with AMPure XP magnetic beads (Beckman Coulter, USA). An indexed
187 adapter was ligated to the fragmented DNA. The quality and quantity of the indexed libraries
188 were measured using an Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent, USA) and QFX fluorometer
189 (Denovix, USA) and pooled in an equimolar quantity (Caporaso et al., 2012). Cluster generation
190 and paired-end 2×150 nucleotide read sequencing were performed on one lane of the HiSeq 4000
191 sequencer (Illumina, USA) at the Omics Sciences and Bioinformatics Center (Chulalongkorn
192 University, Thailand). The quality and adaptor trimming of the FASTQ files were conducted
193 using Trim Galore! version 0.4.4 (Babraham Bioinformatics, 2020). To profile the abundance of
194 the microbial communities, the filtered sequence reads were classified using Centrifuge version
195 1.0.4 (Kim et al., 2016) with the prebuilt index database and default settings. The sequence reads
196 were assigned a taxonomy using the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)
197 databases. The profiling of the viral metagenomic communities was completed using the
198 Microbial Community Profiling method (MiCoP) (Lapierre et al., 2019). The MiCoP was set up
199 to use the BWA-MEM mapping method to map the sequence reads (Li, 2013). Finally, the
200 sequence reads were assigned virus species using the full NCBI Virus RefSeq databases, and
201 these results were then filtered and profiled using the compute-abundances.py script. To predict
202 the ARG, all the cleaned shotgun sequences were mapped into the AMR gene sequences from
203 the ResFinder database (version 2022-02-04) (Bortolaia et al., 2020) using k-mer alignment
204 (Clausen et al., 2018). The raw read count was converted to the percent relative abundance
205 before further analysis. The ARG relative abundances from the different sampling sites were

206 clustered using the unweighted pair group method with the arithmetic mean agglomerative
207 hierarchical clustering method. Hypothetical testing for significant differences was conducted via
208 Welch's *t*-test. The plot and statistical test for the ARG were performed in STAMP (version
209 2.1.3) (Parks et al., 2014).

210

211 *2.5 Statistical data analysis*

212 The similarities within the microbial community were assessed using principal coordinate
213 analysis (PCoA) via the Bray–Curtis dissimilarity matrix. The permutational multivariate
214 analysis of variance (PERMANOVA) was computed to determine any significant differences
215 between the land use groups. A comparison of the microbial diversity and abundance between
216 the land use groups was performed using the linear discriminant analysis (LDA) effect size
217 method (Segata et al., 2011) with an LDA score greater than 4.0. We conducted the correlation
218 analysis using Spearman's correlation (R package corrplot, version 0.84) on U-Score rank (R
219 package 'NADA2' version 1.0.1). The agglomeration method ward.D2 was used for the
220 hierarchical clustering (R package stat (R Core Team, 2019)).

221

222 **3. Results and discussion**

223 *3.1 Microbial community structure and presumptive functions*

224 The PCoA analysis of the microbial sequencing profiles demonstrated separate clusters in the
225 cultural and suburban zones, as supported by the PERMANOVA test (Fig. 2 and Table S3).
226 Although the microbial diversity data for the shotgun sequencing included eukaryote and virus
227 domains in addition to bacteria and virus domains (Fig. S1), we observed consistent microbial
228 diversities between the two platforms, which was in line with a previous report (Caporaso et al.,

229 2012). The bacteria domain was deemed predominant by both the shotgun and amplicon
230 sequencing platforms, with the eukaryota and viruses additionally characterized via the shotgun
231 sequencing (Fig. S1). *Proteobacteria*, *Actinobacteria*, *Bacteroidetes*, *Firmicutes*, and
232 *Cyanobacteria* were the five most abundant phyla, within the bacterial domain, as determined by
233 both sequencing platforms. *Chordata* phylum of the eukaryote domain was additionally
234 predominant, as ascertained by the shotgun sequencing (Fig. S2). *Epsilonbacteraeota* is a newly
235 established phylum, which was reclassified from a class of the *Proteobacteria* phylum, and was
236 therefore identified as a separate phylum only in the amplicon sequencing due to differences in
237 the databases used for the two sequencing platforms (Waite et al., 2017). These core phyla have
238 also been found in other tropical and subtropical anthropogenically impacted freshwater (Ibekwe
239 et al., 2016; Obieze et al., 2022; Ung et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016). The shotgun sequencing
240 indicated that the *Pseudomonas* and *Burkholderia* genera of the *Proteobacteria* phylum were
241 most dominant, while the amplicon sequencing showed that C39 was most abundant (Fig. 3).
242 The LDA scores indicated significant differences between the land-based zones for certain taxa
243 (Fig. S3).

244

245 Notably, we observed a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) in the copresence of certain genera,
246 such as *Arcobacter* (nitrogen-fixing bacteria) and *Sulfurospirillum* (nitrate-reducing bacteria),
247 *Acidovorax* (nitrate-reducing bacteria) and *Limnohabitans* (planktonic bacteria), and *Acidovorax*
248 and *Hydrogenophaga* (both nitrate-reducing bacteria) (Fig. S4). The water quality parameters of
249 the canal water samples from sites A to J indicated narrow ranges comprising DO at 0.1–
250 1.6 mg/L, conductivity at 551–1,054 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$, a pH of 7.14–7.56, a temperature of 28.7°C–30.1°C,
251 and salinity of 0.1–0.5 parts per thousand (Table S1), which concurred with the canal’s historical

252 record (PCD, 2018). The PCA plot showed the following clusters of top 40 genera as identified
253 by the shotgun sequencing (Fig. S5a) and water quality parameters: DO – *Ralstonia*, pH –
254 temperature – *Allochromatium* – *Cyanobium* – *Synechococcus*, and salinity – conductivity –
255 *Rhodobacter*. The top 40 genera analyzed by the amplicon sequencing (Fig. S5b) were also
256 clustered with the water quality parameters as follows: DO – *Pseudomonas*, salinity –
257 conductivity – uncultured bacterial in family *Rikenellaceae*, and pH – temperature –
258 *Hydrogenophaga* – *Dechlorobacter* – unclassified genus in family *Lentimicroblaceae*.

259

260 The associated microbial functions of the top 40 genera are summarized in Table S4. The nitrate-
261 reducing bacteria group represented the highest relative abundance in the canal water, which
262 could be due to the denitrification process promoted by the low oxygen condition and high
263 nitrate concentrations in the Saen Saep Canal (Jantharadej et al., 2021; PCD, 2018). Another
264 dominant group, the nitrogen-fixing bacteria, can fix the nitrogen gas in the atmosphere and
265 convert it into an ammonia form in water. Moreover, certain sampling points contained low DO
266 and possibly had an anaerobic condition, which resulted in the presence of fermentative bacteria.
267 Pathogenic genera, including *Pseudomonas*, *Mycobacterium*, *Aeromonas*, *Acinetobacter*,
268 *Arcobacter*, and *Bacteroides*, have also been reported in urban lakes and rivers (Cui et al., 2019;
269 Dong et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2018).

270

271 *3.2 Pathogenic bacterial species*

272 The shotgun metagenomic sequencing revealed the 35 most abundant pathogenic bacterial
273 species (Fig. 4). The predominant species comprising more than 0.5% relative abundance in at
274 least one canal water sample were the *Burkholderia cepacia* complex (0.6%–2.3%), *Arcobacter*

275 *butzleri* (0.03%–1.5 %), *Burkholderia vietnamiensis* (0.1%–1.2%), the *Enterobacter cloacae*
276 complex (0.1%–1.2%), and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (0.07%–0.7%). The *Burkholderia cepacia*
277 complex and other abundant species in the *Burkholderia* group showed high abundance at canal
278 sites G and H in the suburban area. The *Burkholderia* species are opportunistic pathogens that
279 cause respiratory tract infections, especially in patients with cystic fibrosis. They have been
280 found in municipal wastewater (Chu et al., 2018; LiPuma, 2005; Ragupathi and Veeraraghavan,
281 2019), and their association with ARGs and high resistance to antiseptics and disinfectants has
282 raised further concerns with respect to public health (Chu et al., 2018; McDonnell and Russell,
283 1999).

284

285 *Arcobacter butzleri* was the second most prevalent pathogenic species in the canal and the most
286 abundant in the cultural zone (1.48% and 0.67% at sites A and B). This species can cause watery
287 diarrhea and bacteremia and has been associated with fecal pollution from wastewater (Shrestha
288 et al., 2022). *A. butzleri* has previously been isolated from canal water in Thailand (Morita et al.,
289 2004; Tomioka et al., 2021). The presence of this bacterial pathogen in environmental water
290 could pose a risk to public health, especially with its relatively higher persistence to high organic
291 matter concentrations and warm conditions compared to other enteric pathogens (Tomioka et al.,
292 2021; Van Driessche and Houf, 2008) and its reported AMR (Ferreira et al., 2019).

293

294 The *Enterobacter cloacae* complex and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* showed the highest abundance at
295 sites E and F in the commercial area (Fig. 4). The *E. cloacae* complex has been associated with
296 infections of the urinary tract, respiratory tract, skin, and bloodstream in immunocompromised
297 patients (Brisse et al., 2006; Selenic et al., 2003), and antibiotic resistance has increased the

298 significance of *E. cloacae* as a public health concern (Chen and Huang, 2013; Ebomah and
299 Okoh, 2020) (Fig. 4). *Klebsiella pneumoniae* is an opportunistic pathogen that causes frequent
300 outbreaks in hospitals (Wu and Li, 2015). A study reported closely related clinical and
301 environmental *Klebsiella pneumoniae* isolates from hospital patients, hospital sewage, and the
302 canals surrounding a hospital in Thailand. (Runcharoen et al., 2017). This species has been
303 prioritized for AMR concern and included in the WHO's (2017) global AMR surveillance
304 system, GLASS.

305

306

307

308 3.3 Viral community structure

309 The relative abundance of viral communities in the canal water samples, as identified by shotgun
310 metagenomic sequencing, represented 0.28%–0.67% of all the microbial communities (Fig. S1a).
311 Overall, the viral community structures comprised five Baltimore classes, mostly single-stranded
312 RNA (ssRNA) viruses (34.8%–60.4% of all virus sequences) and double-stranded DNA
313 (dsDNA) viruses without an RNA stage (31.5%–58.9%) (Fig. S6a). *Picornaviridae* ssRNA,
314 which are vertebrate-infecting viruses, were the most abundant family in all the canal water
315 samples (33.8%–56.9%) (Fig. S6b). The dsDNA viruses comprised 10 predominant families,
316 namely, *Myoviridae*, *Podoviridae*, *Siphoviridae*, *Baculoviridae*, *Alloherpesviridae*,
317 *Herpesviridae*, *Nudiviridae*, *Phycodnaviridae*, *Polydnaviridae*, and *Poxviridae*. The families
318 *Myoviridae*, *Siphoviridae*, and *Podoviridae*, which belong to the *Caudovirales* order, constituted
319 the major bacteriophages in the canal water (8.8%–41.3%). Previous studies have reported the
320 families *Myoviridae*, *Siphoviridae*, and *Podoviridae* as mainly dominant in freshwater (Gu et al.,

321 2018; Mohiuddin and Schellhorn, 2015; Tseng et al., 2013). The *Baculoviridae* family, which
322 infects invertebrates (i.e., insects), was also predominant at 0.7%–25.6%, while the
323 *Herpesviridae* family, which infects vertebrates, was noticeable in the samples from sites E and
324 F in the commercial area and sites H, I, and J in the suburban area, at up to 4% relative
325 abundance. Moreover, almost all the dsRNA viruses were sorted into an unclassified family
326 related to fungi-infecting viruses and accounted for 3.0%–12.2% of the total viral sequences.
327 Seven virus groups were classified according to their host types, with a higher abundance of the
328 vertebrate-infecting viruses, bacteriophages, invertebrate-infecting viruses, and fungi-infecting
329 viruses, and a relatively lower abundance of the plant-infecting viruses, algae-infecting viruses,
330 and protozoa-infecting viruses (Fig. S6c).

331
332 The 35 most abundant virus species in the canal water samples are shown in Fig. 5.
333 Encephalomyocarditis virus (EMCV), a vertebrate-infecting virus in the *Picornaviridae* family
334 that causes a broad range of infections in mammals and humans, showed the highest relative
335 abundance at 33.3%–58.2% of the total virus sequences. Alcelaphine gammaherpesvirus types 1
336 and 2, which infect ruminants, were observed in the samples from sites E and F in the
337 commercial area at up to 2% of the total virus sequences. Moreover, fish-infecting virus species
338 such as the piscine myocarditis-like virus, Cyprinid herpesvirus types 1 and 3, and fathead
339 minnow picornavirus were detected in the canal water. With a relative abundance greater than
340 10% in the samples from sites A, C, E, G, I, and J, the invertebrate-infecting virus *Orgyia*
341 *pseudotsugata* multiple nucleopolyhedrovirus, which belongs to the *Baculoviridae* family, was
342 the most dominant of the insect-infecting viruses in all the canal water samples. *Saccharomyces*

343 *cerevisiae* killer virus M1, a fungi-infecting (yeast) virus, was detected in all the samples at a
344 range of 3.0%–12.2% of the total virus sequences.

345

346 Several bacteriophages, including *Bacillus* phage Stitch, were detected in the canal water and
347 found to be highly abundant at sites A, C, D, and G, where they accounted for 9.2%–25.5% of
348 the total virus sequences. A higher abundance of *Planktothrix* phage PaV-LD and *Rhodobacter*
349 phage RcapNL at over 2% relative abundance was observed at sites G, H, I, and J, while
350 *Salmonella* phage SJ46 and *Escherichia* virus P1 were detected at more than 2.5% at sites A and
351 B. The *Aeromonas* phage vB_AsaM-56 had a relative abundance of 5% at site B, and
352 *Staphylococcus* phage Team1 (4%) was dominant at site H. The other bacteriophages included
353 *Burkholderia* virus phiE 125, *Bordetella* virus BPP1, uncultured crAssphage, *Ralstonia* phage
354 RSS30, and various species of *Pseudomonas* phages.

355

356 3.4 Pathogenic viruses

357 The main human viral pathogen in the canal water was EMCV (33.3%–58.2%) across all the
358 samples (Fig. 6). EMCV belongs to the *Cardiovirus* genus of the family *Picornaviridae* and can
359 infect a broad variety of vertebrate species, including rodents, pigs, birds, cattle, wild animals,
360 several species of non-human primates, and humans (Hammoumi et al., 2012). EMCV causes
361 acute myocarditis outbreaks in piglets and pregnant sows on pig farms worldwide (Feng et al.,
362 2015). EMCV infection in humans is fairly common via the respiratory and oral routes and is
363 mostly asymptomatic (Carocci and Bakkali-Kassimi, 2012; Oberste et al., 2009). It is likely that
364 the rodents or infected rodent carcasses common in the city's water pipes may be involved in the

365 spread of EMCV in the canal water. Rodents have been reported as a major source of EMCV
366 outbreaks via water in pig farms (Alexandersen et al., 2019).

367

368 Other human viral pathogens (i.e., hepatitis C virus genotype 1, human alphaherpesvirus 1, and
369 human betaherpesvirus 6A) represented less than 1% across all the samples. The hepatitis C
370 virus is a bloodborne pathogen that causes acute or chronic hepatitis. It can be transmitted by
371 drug injection, blood transfusion, hemodialysis, organ transplantation, and less frequently, sexual
372 relations (Modi and Liang, 2008). It is therefore less likely for the hepatitis C virus to be
373 transmitted via contaminated canal water. Human alphaherpesviruses and betaherpesviruses
374 belong to the *Herpesviridae* family, which contains dsDNA (i.e., no RNA stage). They primarily
375 cause infections of the mouth, face, eyes, pharynx, and central nervous system and can be
376 transmitted via skin exposure, oral secretions, and respiratory droplets (Chayavichitsilp et al.,
377 2009; Dockrell, 2003). Although waterborne transmission is not deemed the main route of
378 hepatitis C and human herpesvirus infection, their genomes have been found in wastewater,
379 polluted freshwater (Alexyuk et al., 2017; Corpuz et al., 2020; McCall et al., 2020), and sewage-
380 contaminated aerosols (Brisebois et al., 2018). In addition, the *Herpesviridae* family is persistent
381 in water environments and aerosols at ambient temperatures (Sobsey and Meschke, 2003), which
382 could be a risk factor for environmental transmission.

383

384 Notably, the common enteric human pathogenic viruses, namely, noroviruses, hepatitis A and E
385 viruses, rotaviruses, enteroviruses, adenoviruses, astroviruses, and caliciviruses, were not
386 detected by shotgun metagenomic sequencing. CrAssphage, a bacteriophage used worldwide as a
387 human fecal indicator (Sabar et al., 2022), showed the highest abundance at the cultural sites A

388 and B with a relative abundance of 2.14%–2.45%, while the relative abundance at the other sites
389 was lower at 0.16%–0.78%. CrAssphage has been found in human sewage and
390 anthropogenically impacted freshwater and seawater and is thus used as a human-specific fecal
391 source tracker in Thailand (Akechai Kongprajug et al., 2019; Sangkaew et al., 2021).

392

393 3.5 ARGs

394 The water samples along the canal revealed a total of 611 ARG subtypes from 15 ARG types
395 (Fig. 7a). Those related to resistance to beta-lactam (206 subtypes) were the most diverse ARG
396 types, followed by the ARG types associated with resistance to aminoglycoside (94 subtypes),
397 tetracycline (80 subtypes), macrolide (79 subtypes), trimethoprim (36 subtypes), phenicol (24
398 subtypes), colistin (22 subtypes), sulphonamide (22 subtypes), quinolone (18 subtypes), and
399 disinfectant (six subtypes), as well as other ARG types, namely, those linked to resistance to
400 fusidic acid, glycopeptide, nitroimidazole, rifampicin, and fosfomycin, with a total of 24
401 subtypes. The six most abundant ARG types were those related to resistance to beta-lactam
402 (17.0%–27.5%), macrolide (14.5%–32.1%), tetracycline (15.6%–20.2%), aminoglycoside
403 (9.6%–15.3%), sulfonamide (6.4%–10.9%), and quinolone (4.6%–13.1%) (Fig. 7a). These
404 groups have been found to be widespread in municipal wastewater even after treatment (Ping et
405 al., 2022; Raza et al., 2022; Zou et al., 2022). Moreover, macrolide-resistant genes had the
406 highest abundance (32.1%) at site D in the commercial zone. The most abundant single gene
407 subtype was the *tlr(c)* gene in the macrolide type, which encodes tylosin-resistance protein, with
408 a 4.4% relative abundance at site B in the cultural zone. The prevalent genes with more than 1%
409 relative abundance at almost all the sites were the quinolone resistance gene *OqxB* and
410 sulphonamide resistance genes *sul1* and *sul2*, while the aminoglycoside resistance genes *aac(3)-*

411 *VIII* and *aac(3)-IIIb*, betalactam resistance genes *bla*_{SRT-2}, *bla*_{PAU-1}, *bla*_{OKP-B-8}, *POM-1*, *bla*_{OXA-}
412 ₄₅₅, and *bla*_{GES-23}, macrolide resistance genes *srm(B)*, *erm(38)*, *ole(C)*, *car(A)*, and *tlr(C)*,
413 quinolone resistance genes *qepA1*, and *qepA2*, and tetracycline resistance genes *tet(C)*, *tet(M)*,
414 *tcr3*, and *otr(A)* were each present in the water at at least one site (Table S5). The abundance of
415 ARG types was not significantly different between the commercial and suburban sites; however,
416 it was different at the cultural sites (Fig. 7b). The cultural sites contained a higher abundance of
417 trimethoprim resistance genes than the commercial sites and a higher abundance of beta-lactam
418 and trimethoprim resistance genes than the suburban sites, although they had a lower abundance
419 of sulphonamide resistance genes than the suburban sites ($p < 0.05$). As previously reported by
420 Davis et al. (2020) and Liu et al. (2021), the different types and prevalence of anthropogenic
421 activities from the three land-based zones (Table S2) could have contributed to the diverse levels
422 of ARG contamination.

423

424 *3.6 Implications for canal water quality management and public health risk mitigation*

425 In this study, we utilized NGS analyses to characterize the microbial pollutants (i.e., bacterial
426 and viral human pathogens and ARGs) in the canal water in Bangkok, Thailand, to determine the
427 risks to boat commuters. Both 16s rRNA amplicon sequencing and shotgun metagenomic
428 sequencing delivered similar taxonomic classifications at the sampling sites. Consequently, the
429 amplicon sequencing method could serve as a more economical option for this purpose. Shotgun
430 metagenomic sequencing could provide further information on the levels of microbial species,
431 various genes of interest, and the molecular functions encoded in the metagenomes (Ibarbalz et
432 al., 2016; Ranjan et al., 2016). Currently, the use of NGS technologies may present challenges,
433 such as high costs and the need for specialized equipment and data analysis and interpretation

434 expertise (Garner et al., 2021). However, with the rapid development of new technologies and
435 eventual lower costs, NGS offers considerable potential for an improved understanding of
436 microbial ecology in the fields of water engineering and water quality management (Garner et
437 al., 2021; McDaniel et al., 2021). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the NGS
438 application proved to be useful in monitoring for SARS-CoV-2 and its variants to determine
439 community outbreaks (Agrawal et al., 2022; Martínez-Puchol et al., 2021; Smyth et al., 2022).
440 While NGS could offer a holistic approach to microbial community characterization, its limited
441 resolution for taxonomic identification at a species or strain level needs to be addressed. This
442 limitation could be countered by combining NGS with robust gene-targeted molecular detection
443 method (e.g., quantitative or digital PCR) to monitor microorganisms of concern, such as
444 waterborne pathogens and microbial source tracking markers, in wastewater and polluted water,
445 as well as for SARS-CoV-2 surveillance in wastewater (Ho et al., 2022; Kongprajug et al.,
446 2021a; Sangsanont et al., 2022).

447
448 This study demonstrated that the microbial pollutants identified in the canal water were mostly
449 respiratory and gastrointestinal microorganisms, among them, the predominant pathogenic
450 *Burkholderia cepacia*, *Arcobacter butzleri*, and encephalomyocarditis virus, as well as ARG
451 groups related to resistance to beta-lactam, aminoglycoside, tetracycline, and macrolide.
452 Epidemiological surveillance data for Bangkok in 2021 revealed that diarrhea was the leading
453 cause of morbidity at 393.3 per 100,000 population, followed by pyrexia (160.3 per 100,000) and
454 pneumonia (106.1 per 100,000) (Institute for Urban Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).
455 Although no information on the routes of exposure for these morbidity rates was published, the
456 risk of exposure to these pathogens and ARGs could be aggravated by aerosols and airborne

457 particulate matter (Ginn et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2022). At present, no mitigation measures aimed
458 at preventing aerosol and urban particulate matter exposure are in place; however, such measures
459 could lead to lower public health risks. Furthermore, quantitative microbial risk assessments
460 could be conducted to determine the current risks and evaluate the performance of any mitigation
461 measures (Dada and Gyawali, 2021; Denpetkul et al., 2022; Kongprajug et al., 2021b).

462
463 This study further revealed that microbial compositions and ARG profiles can be associated with
464 zoning. The Saen Saep Canal could be polluted by wastewater sources from various residential
465 and communal facilities, 70% of whose untreated and treated effluent exceeds treated effluent
466 standards (PCD, 2016). While the wastewater from a small area is connected through sewer lines
467 to a municipal wastewater treatment plant, most of the areas along the Saen Saep Canal are not
468 connected to sewer lines (PCD, 2016). The Saen Saep Canal reportedly receives approximately
469 49,000 m³ wastewater per day, which corresponds to biochemical oxygen demand loading of
470 2,630 kg per day (PCD, 2016). However, pinpointing the wastewater sources that could be
471 contributing to the canal at each sampling site is a challenge due to the complexities of the city
472 plans and the possibility of wastewater inputs from upstream activities and connecting canals.
473 Notably, the cultural zone constitutes the highest population density compared to the other two
474 zones and serves tourists visiting cultural attractions (Table S1). Tourists who are accommodated
475 in the cultural area (sites A and B) could carry intestinal microbiomes that are different from
476 those of the local residents, (Yatsunenko et al., 2012), and they could thus contribute to the
477 differences in microbial diversity in the canal. In particular, crAssphage, which was detected at a
478 higher relative abundance at the cultural sites, has been described as displaying different
479 shedding rates among populations from different geographical regions (Cinek et al., 2018;

480 Stachler and Bibby, 2014). Furthermore, tourists, who reportedly also carry different patterns of
481 ARB and ARGs, could account for the differences in ARGs at the cultural sites (Benenson et al.,
482 2018; Bokhary et al., 2021). Notwithstanding, contributions of microbial and gene diversity from
483 tourists require further investigation due to tourists' characteristically short-term stays and
484 turnover dynamics. Hospital wastewater may further contribute to the dissimilarities in the canal
485 microbial diversity as in vivo exposure to antibiotics affects the gut microbiome (Liu et al.,
486 2020). Age, lifestyle, and social networks also affect human gut microbiomes (Brito et al., 2019;
487 Obregon-Tito et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2019). Environmental factors, as well as contaminated
488 ARGs, could further influence the regrowth and persistence of contaminated microorganisms
489 (Booncharoen et al., 2018; Dean and Mitchell, 2022; He et al., 2022; Ott et al., 2021; Yang et al.,
490 2022). The cultural sites showed high *Arcobacter butzleri* and crAssphage as well as beta-lactam
491 and trimethoprim resistance genes . Our study thus indicates that further investigation of the
492 wastewater treatment plants and interventions at those facilities may be required at the cultural
493 sites. Furthermore, the effects of stormwater runoff on pollution contamination into the canal
494 should be studied to provide insights into microbial pollution during wet weather conditions.

495

496 In summary, similar to other locations worldwide, a better understanding of the microbial risks
497 of polluted canal water in Thailand could facilitate appropriate interventions, such as commuter
498 protective equipment, protective barriers on boats, and wastewater reduction at the source, with
499 the aim of improving the quality of life of boat passengers and residents living near the canal.
500 We supports the recently approved governmental agreement of Thailand's 11-year Saen Saep
501 Canal Environment Rehabilitation Development Plan (2021–2031) on water quality restoration

502 and the 20-year Thailand National Strategy with its focus on quality-of-life improvements based
503 on green growth.

504

505 **4. Conclusions**

506 This study demonstrated the use of shotgun metagenomic sequencing and 16s rRNA amplicon
507 sequencing to evaluate microbial water quality in an urban transportation canal. The microbial
508 compositions and ARG profiles indicated associations with zoning. The main presumptive
509 microbial functions were involved with anaerobic photosynthesis and fermentation, which
510 corresponded to the low DO conditions in the canal. The main bacterial and viral pathogens
511 identified were the *Burkholderia cepacian* complex, *Arcobacter butzleri*, the
512 encephalomyocarditis virus, and the hepatitis C virus, all of which pose risks to public health.
513 The antibiotic-resistance profiles in this study also indicated a risk of ARG transmission through
514 the environment, with those associated with resistance to beta-lactam, aminoglycoside,
515 tetracycline, and macrolide as the most abundant ARG types. This study emphasized that, while
516 showing certain limitations in its ability to identify common waterborne bacteria and viruses, the
517 application of NGS in elucidating microbial water quality could assist in the development of
518 water quality restoration and mitigation measures to reduce the health risks to water
519 transportation passengers and residents living near polluted canal water.

520

521 **CRedit authorship contribution statement**

522 Krittayapong Jantharadej: Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Visualization.

523 Akechai Kongprajug: Formal analysis, Visualization. Wuttichai Mhuantong: Formal analysis,

524 Visualization. Tawan Limpiyakorn: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing – review & editing.

525 Benjaporn Boonchayaanant Suwannasilp: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing – review &
526 editing. Skorn Mongkolsuk: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing – review & editing,
527 Supervision, Funding acquisition. Kwanrawee Sirikanchana: Conceptualization, Resources,
528 Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

529

530 **Declaration of competing interest**

531 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal
532 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

533

534 **Acknowledgements**

535 This work was financially supported by the Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI),
536 Chulabhorn Research Institute (grant no. 2536702/43410).

537

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941 **Figure legends**

942 **Fig. 1.** Map of the sampling sites along the Saen Saep Canal. Sites A and B (green) are located in
943 the cultural zone, sites C–F (orange) in the commercial zone, and sites G–J (yellow) in the
944 suburban residential zone.

945 **Fig. 2.** Principal coordinate analysis of the microbial communities in the canal water samples
946 from sites A–J when analyzed using shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and 16s rRNA
947 amplicon sequencing (b)

948 **Fig. 3.** The relative abundance of the 40 most abundant microorganisms in the genus levels in the
949 canal water samples from sites A–J analyzed using shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and
950 16S rRNA gene sequencing (b)

951 **Fig. 4.** Relative abundance of the 35 most abundant pathogenic bacteria in the canal water
952 samples from sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing

953 **Fig. 5.** The relative abundance of the 35 most abundant viruses in the canal water samples from
954 sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing

955 **Fig. 6.** The relative abundance of the human viral pathogens in the canal water samples from
956 sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing

957 **Fig. 7.** The relative abundance of the ARG types in the canal water samples from sites A–J using
958 shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and the ARG types that showed significant differences in
959 line with the land use sites (b). The other ARG types include those related to resistance to fusidic
960 acid, glycopeptide, nitroimidazole, rifampicin, and fosfomycin.

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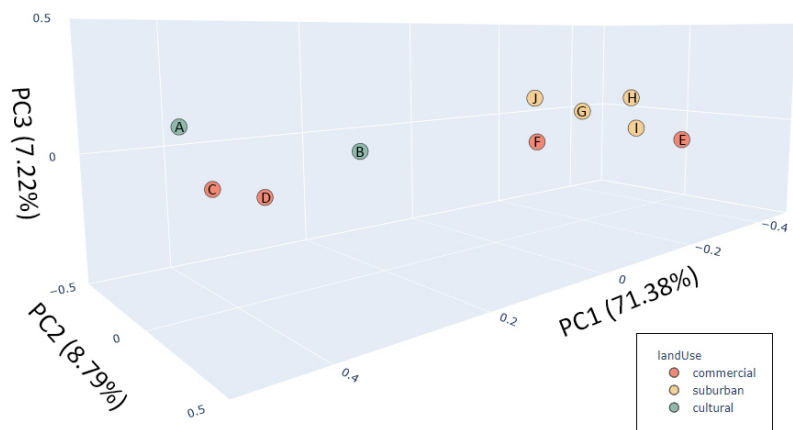


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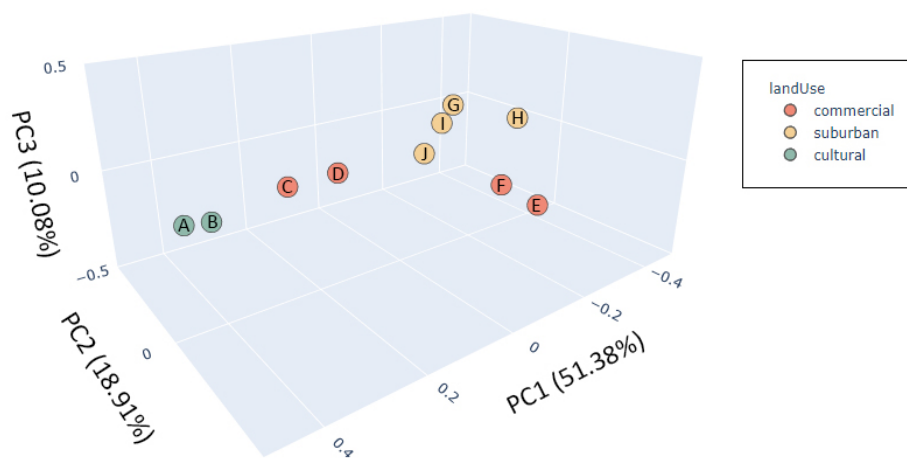
Fig. 1. Map of the sampling sites along the Saen Saep Canal. Sites A and B (green) are located in the cultural zone, sites C–F (orange) in the commercial zone, and sites G–J (yellow) in the suburban residential zone.

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973 (a)



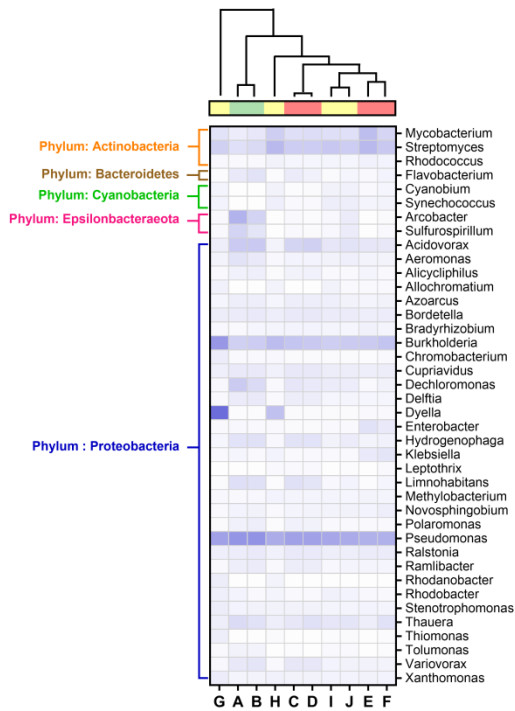
974 (b)

975 **Fig. 2.** Principal coordinate analysis of the microbial communities in the canal water samples

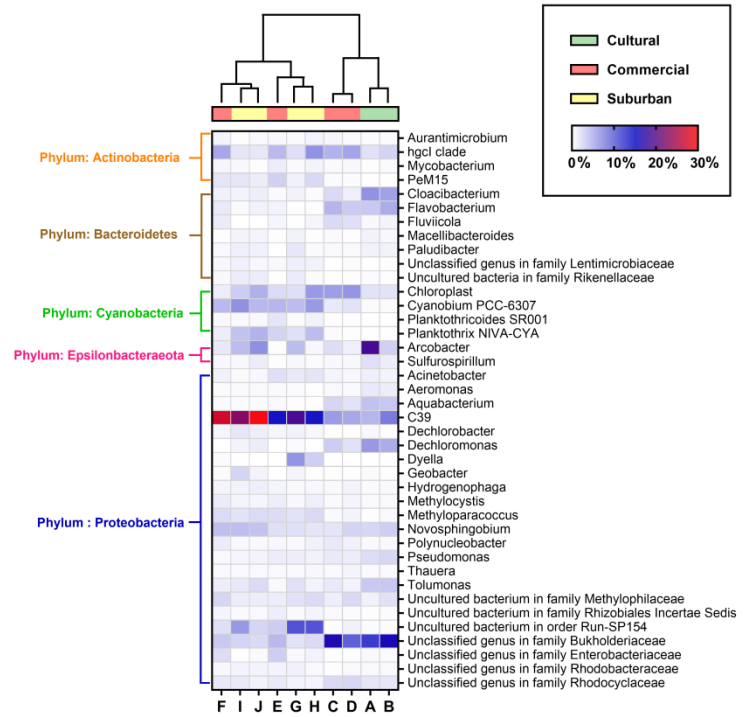
976 from sites A–J when analyzed using shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and 16s rRNA

977 amplicon sequencing (b)

a)



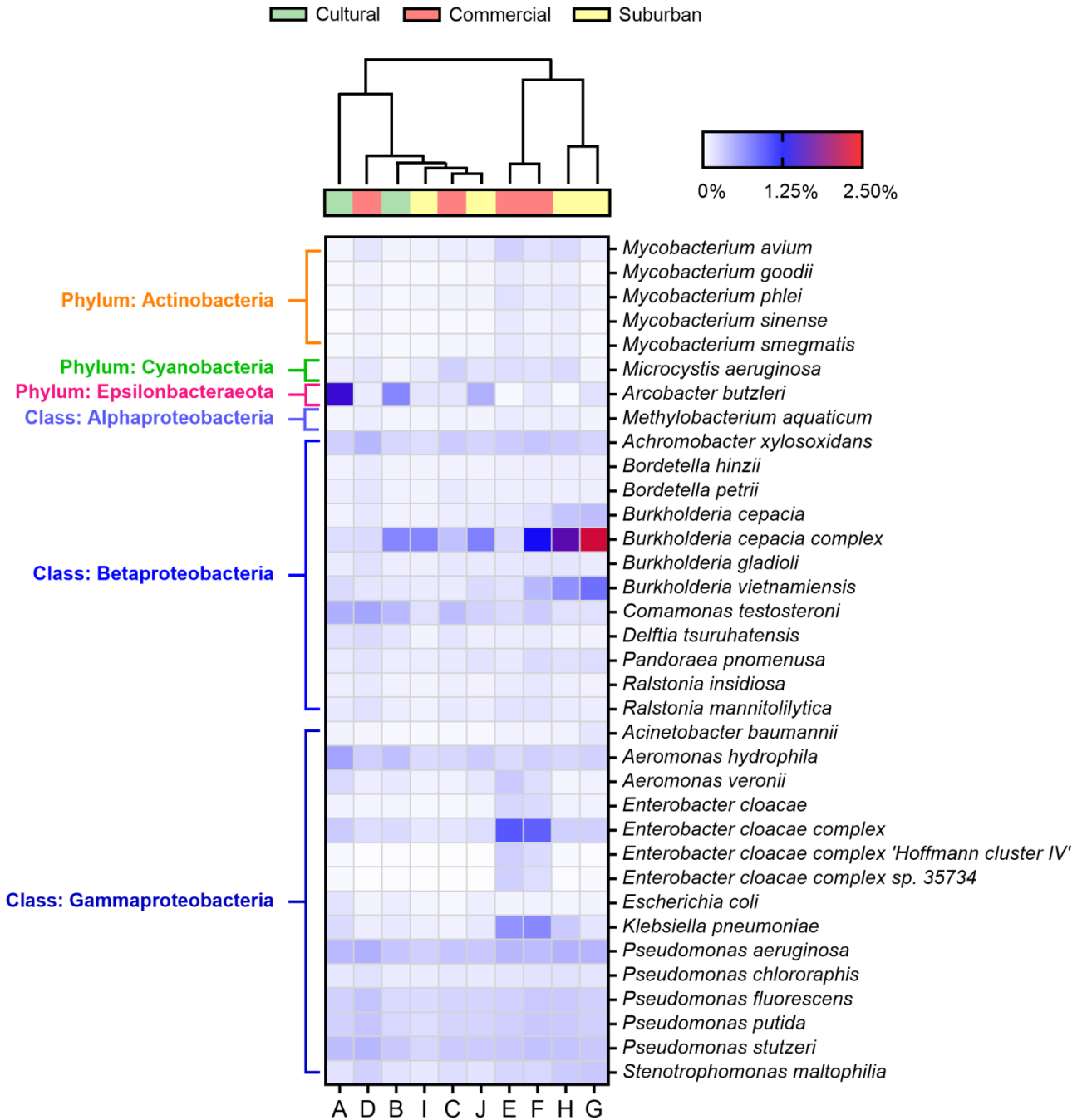
b)



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979 **Fig. 3.** The relative abundance of the 40 most abundant microorganisms in the genus levels in the
 980 canal water samples from sites A–J analyzed using shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and
 981 16S rRNA gene sequencing (b)

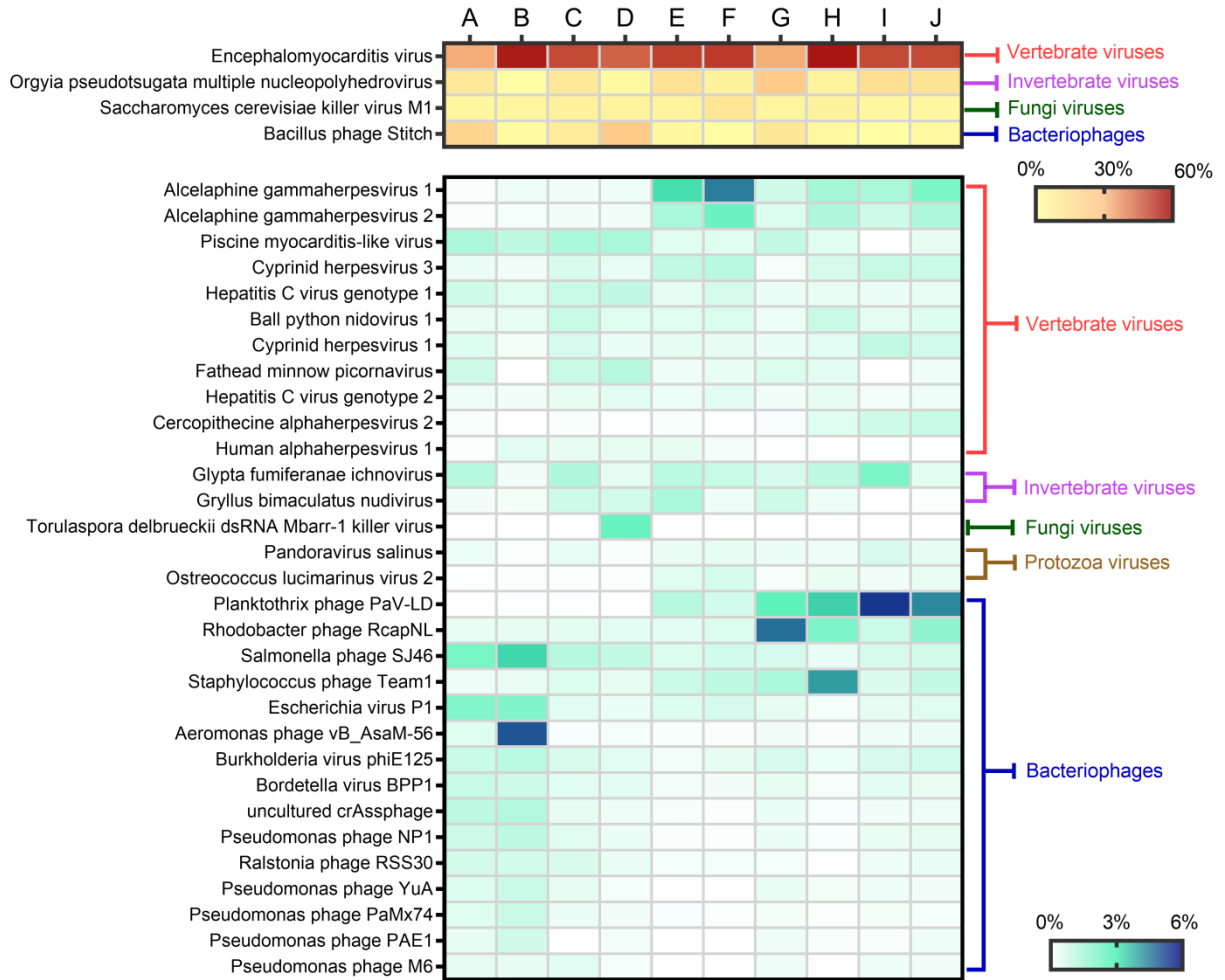
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984 **Fig. 4.** Relative abundance of the 35 most abundant pathogenic bacteria in the canal water

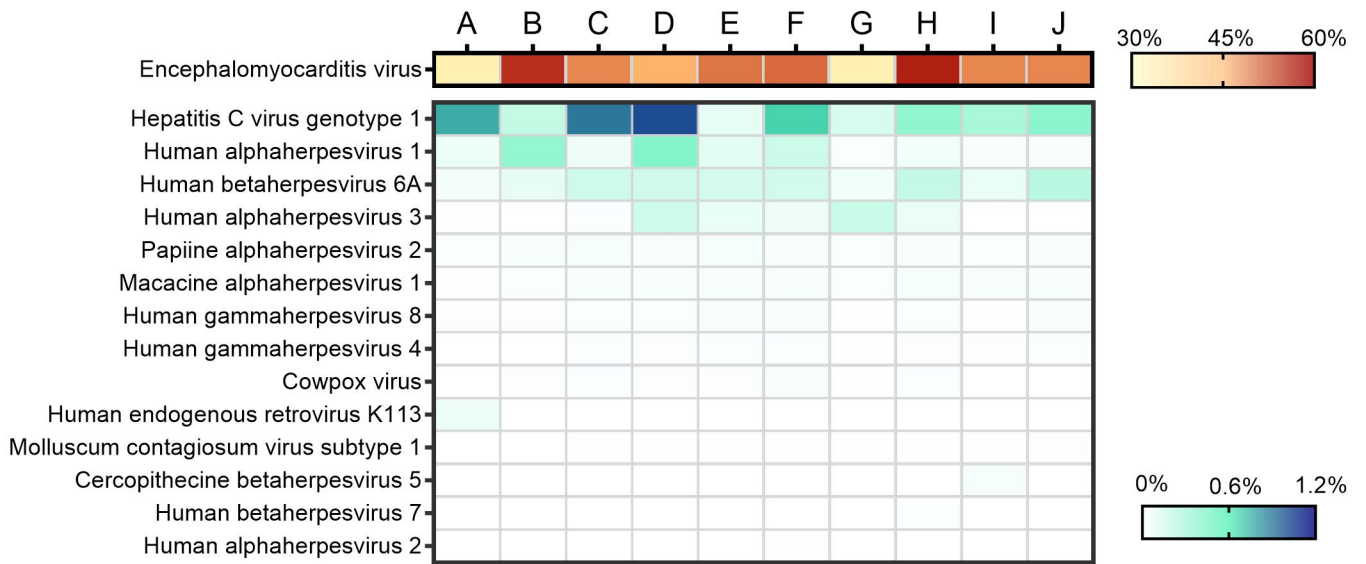
985 samples from sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing



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987 **Fig. 5.** The relative abundance of the 35 most abundant viruses in the canal water samples from
 988 sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing

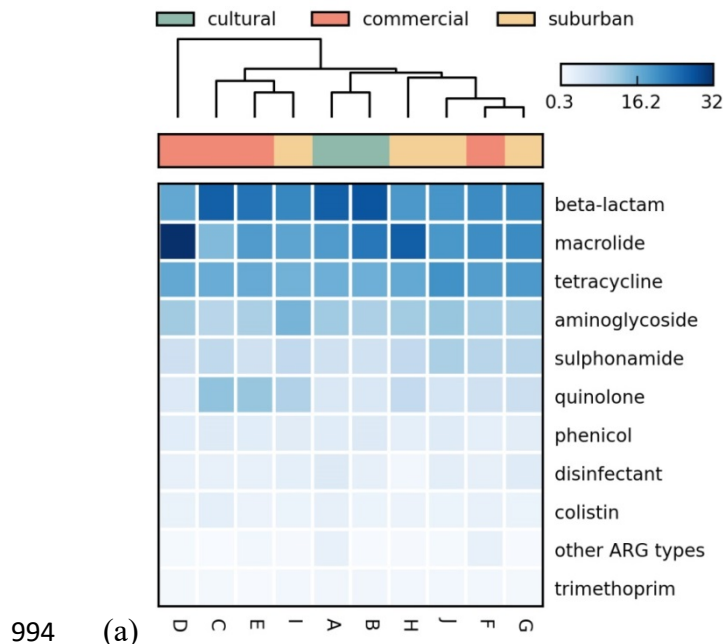
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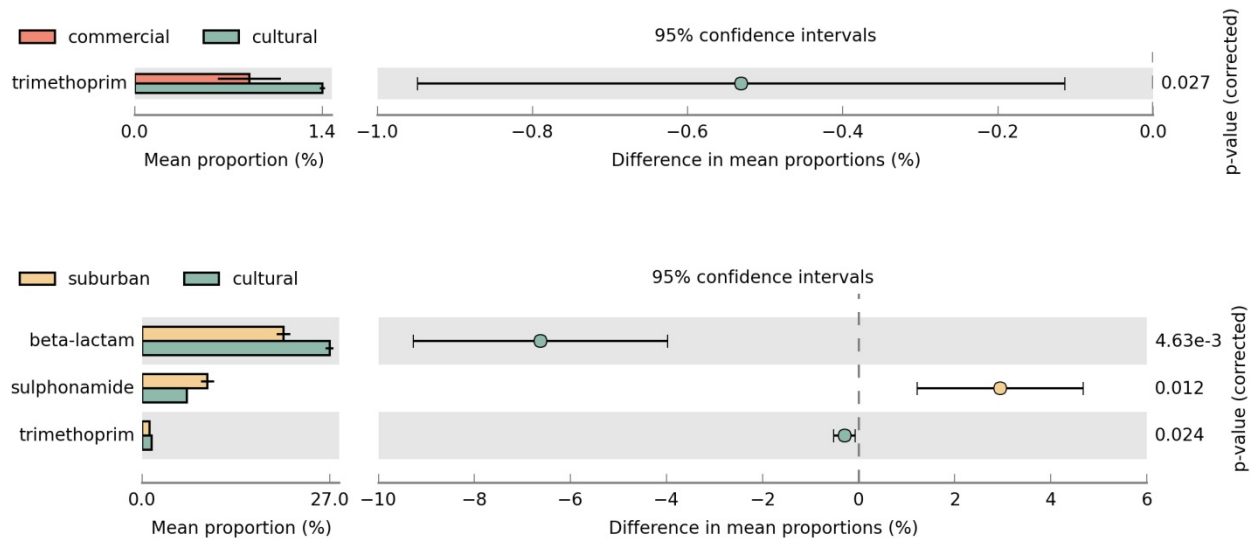
991 **Fig. 6.** The relative abundance of the human viral pathogens in the canal water samples from
 992 sites A–J using shotgun metagenomic sequencing

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994 (a)

995 (b)



996

997 **Fig. 7.** The relative abundance of the ARG types in the canal water samples from sites A–J using
 998 shotgun metagenomic sequencing (a) and the ARG types that showed significant differences in
 999 line with the land use sites (b). The other ARG types include those related to resistance to fusidic
 1000 acid, glycopeptide, nitroimidazole, rifampicin, and fosfomicin.

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