

1 **Review article: ~~A systematic review of~~ Terrestrial dissolved organic carbon in northern**
2 **permafrost**

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23 **Abstract**

24 As the permafrost region warms and permafrost soils thaw, vast ~~pools~~-stores of soil
25 organic carbon (C) become vulnerable to enhanced microbial decomposition and lateral transport
26 into aquatic ecosystems as dissolved organic carbon (DOC). The mobilization of permafrost soil
27 C can drastically alter the net northern permafrost C budget. DOC entering aquatic ecosystems
28 becomes biological available for degradation as well as other types of aquatic processing.
29 However, it currently remains unclear which landscape characteristics are most relevant to
30 consider in terms of predicting DOC concentrations entering aquatic systems from permafrost
31 regions. Here, we conducted a systematic review of 111 studies relating to, or including,
32 concentrations of DOC in terrestrial permafrost ecosystems in the northern circumpolar region
33 published between 2000 – 2022. We present a new permafrost DOC dataset consisting of 2,276
34 DOC concentrations, collected from the top 3 m in permafrost soils across the northern
35 circumpolar region. Concentrations of DOC ranged from 0.1 – 500 mg L⁻¹ (median = 41 mg L⁻¹)
36 across all permafrost zones, ecoregions, soil types, and thermal horizons. DOC concentrations
37 were greatest in the sporadic permafrost zone (101 mg L⁻¹) while lower concentrations were
38 found in the discontinuous (60 mg L⁻¹) and continuous (59 mg L⁻¹) permafrost zones. The highest
39 median DOC concentrations of 66 mg L⁻¹ and 63 mg L⁻¹ were found in coastal tundra and
40 permafrost bog ecosystems, respectively. Coastal tundra (130 mg L⁻¹), permafrost bogs (78 mg
41 L⁻¹), and permafrost wetlands (57 mg L⁻¹) had the highest DOC concentrations in the permafrost
42 lens, representing a potentially long-term store of DOC. Other than in Yedoma ecosystems, DOC
43 concentrations were found to increase following permafrost thaw and were highly constrained by
44 total dissolved nitrogen concentrations. This systematic review highlights how DOC
45 concentrations differ between organic- or mineral-rich deposits across the circumpolar
46 permafrost region and identifies coastal tundra regions as areas of potentially important DOC
47 mobilization. The quantity of permafrost-derived DOC exported laterally to aquatic ecosystems
48 is an important step for predicting its vulnerability to decomposition.

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50 **1. Introduction**

51 Persistent freezing temperatures since the late Pleistocene and Holocene has led to the
52 accumulation and preservation of 1,460 – 1,600 Pg of organic carbon (C) in northern
53 circumpolar permafrost soils (Hugelius et al., 2014; Schuur et al., 2018). However, in recent
54 decades, there has been an amplified level of warming at high latitudes, occurring at four-times
55 the speed of the global average (Rantanen et al., 2021). This is leading to widespread and rapid
56 permafrost thawing which is predicted to continue under various future climate scenarios
57 (Olefeldt et al., 2016). Under the high C emissions representative concentration pathway
58 (RCP8.5), 90% loss of near-surface permafrost is projected to occur by 2300, with the majority
59 of loss occurring by 2100 (McGuire et al., 2018). Increasing temperatures and widespread thaw
60 exposes permafrost C to heterotrophic decomposition, potentially leading to enhanced emissions
61 of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide (CO₂; Schuur et al., 2021)
62 and methane (CH₄; Turetsky et al., 2020). ~~Alternatively~~Additionally, previously frozen soil
63 organic carbon may be mobilized into the aquatic network as dissolved organic carbon (DOC),
64 the quantity and quality of which will likely depend on local and regional hydrology, and
65 landscape characteristics (Tank et al., 2012; Vonk et al., 2015). At high latitudes (>50°N), lakes
66 and rivers of various sizes cover 5.6% and 0.47% of the total area, respectively (Olefeldt et al.,
67 2021), and the landscape C balance at these high latitudes is highly dependent on aquatic C
68 processing (Vonk & Gustafsson, 2013). The increased leaching of recently thawed DOC from
69 permafrost soils will ~~not only~~ increase the currently estimated 25 – 36 Tg DOC year⁻¹ exported
70 into the freshwater system, and subsequently- into the Arctic Ocean (Holmes et al., 2012;
71 Raymond et al., 2007). ~~It may, but will~~ also ~~likely~~ lead to enhanced greenhouse gas emissions
72 from freshwater ecosystems (Dean et al., 2020). However, uncertainty remains as to which
73 terrestrial ecosystems ~~contain the highest concentrations of DOC, are likely to contribute the~~
74 ~~highest concentrations of~~ laterally transport ~~the greatest quantities of ed-permafrost-DOC, and of~~
75 ~~this, which is expected to contribute~~ represent the store of the-DOC most vulnerable to
76 mineralization.

77 Globally, DOC concentrations have been shown to vary across biomes, and spatial and
78 temporal scales (Guo et al., 2020; Langeveld et al., 2020). It has been suggested that at such
79 macro scales hydrology, climate, vegetation type, and soil type be important drivers of DOC

80 cocentrations (Langeveld et al., 2020). Hydrology and climate are important factors shaping
81 ecosystem structure and function in permafrost regions (Andresen et al., 2020; Wang et al.,
82 2019), which in turn influences the spatial distribution of vegetation and soil types. Vegetation
83 type has been shown to be the most important driver of DOC concentrations in Arctic lakes
84 (Stolpmann et al., 2021). Carbon uptake by vegetation, via gross primary production, and SOC
85 stocks in the permafrost region have both been shown to vary across vegetation and soil types
86 (Ma et al., 2023; Hugelius et al., 2014). This variability across vegetation and soil types has
87 important implications for DOC production, which is associated with plant inputs (Moore &
88 Dalva, 2001) and the decomposition and solubilization of SOC due to soil microbial activity
89 (Guggenberger & Zech, 1993). In permafrost soils, the majority of this production is likely to
90 occur near the soil surface as the microbial production of DOC via input of plant-derived labile
91 substrates has been shown to decrease with depth (Hultman et al., 2015; Monteux et al., 2018;
92 Wild et al., 2016) and 65 – 70 % of the SOC store is found in the top 3 m (Hugelius et al., 2014).
93 The spatial distribution discrepancies observed in DOC concentrations from global assessment
94 efforts (Guo et al., 2020; Langeveld et al., 2020) may be reduced for the circumpolar permafrost
95 region by improving understanding of DOC concentrations in the top 3 m across ecosystem
96 types.

97 ~~The contribution of mineralized permafrost C to atmospheric CO₂ and CH₄ balances, known~~
98 ~~as the permafrost C feedback (Schaefer et al., 2014), remains poorly constrained due to~~
99 ~~uncertainty of the magnitude and location of permafrost C emissions (Miner et al., 2022).~~
100 Previous studies have highlighted that t~~he mineralization and~~ lateral transport of DOC, i.e.,
101 mobilization, represents a source of terrestrial permafrost C that can potentially play an
102 important role in both terrestrial and aquatic biogeochemical cycles (Hugelius et al., 2020;
103 Parmentier et al., 2017; Schuur et al., 2022). However, none have quantified DOC mobilization
104 across the permafrost region, and is thus Inclusion of DOC mobilization in attempts to determine
105 the permafrost climate feedback (Schaefer et al., 2014), may reduce current uncertainty in the
106 magnitude and location of permafrost C losses (Miner et al., 2022), particularly as permafrost
107 thaws, an important fraction of the permafrost C feedback. Warming of near surface permafrost
108 causes widespread thawing (Camill, 2005; Jorgenson et al., 2006), which can lead to drastic
109 changes in hydrology, vegetation, and soil carbon dynamics (Liljedahl et al., 2016; Pries et al.,

Commented [LH1]: 4 questions are

1. which ecosystem has the most doc
2. what are the rates of mobilization in each ecosystem
3. what are the major controls on doc conc and mobilization
4. how does mobilization respond to thawing

So then the structure for two paragraph should be
Flow should be

where DOC comes from and what are the controls on this formation and degradation (q1 and 3)
transition this into how different ecosystems are in the region, including climatic differences in where ecosystems are found (q1 and 2) - what we know about this from previous work and syntheses (including outside perm region) - can introduce the idea that syngenetic permafrost can have high losses of oc (alaska peat, alaska soil-schuurs group, and yedoma)
Move into doc mobilization, particularly lateral transport (q2 and 3)
Finish with how thawing influences hydrology and lateral flow - implications for permafrost carbon feedback (q4)

110 2012; Varner et al., 2022), thus impacting both DOC production and mobilization. Several
111 studies have demonstrated that DOC has the potential to be rapidly degraded and mineralized
112 following thermokarst formation (Burd et al., 2020; Payandi-Rolland et al., 2020; Wickland et
113 al., 2018), particularly in higher latitude ecosystems (Ernakovich et al., 2017; Vonk et al., 2013).
114 However, few have compared this lability across ecosystems (Abbot et al., 2014; Fouche et al.,
115 2020; Textor et al., 2019) and less have done so across the permafrost region (Vonk et al., 2015).
116 Determining the ecosystems with the greatest store of DOC that is readily mineralized upon
117 thermokarst formation represents a potentially important step in reducing uncertainty in the
118 permafrost climate feedback. When permafrost is present, the lateral transport of DOC is
119 restricted to flow paths within the unfrozen, organic rich active layer (Woo, 1986). Deeping of
120 the seasonally thawed active layer due to top-down permafrost thaw can lead to longer flow
121 paths for DOC, allowing for enhanced decomposition or adsorption to mineral particles, resulting
122 in reduced DOC export (Kieckhefer et al., 2013; Striegl et al., 2005). Alternatively, thermokarst
123 formation can affect the entire soil profile, leading to surface inundation, and shifting ecological
124 conditions and vegetation communities associated with greater DOC production (Turetsky et al.,
125 2007). This can cause greater hydrological connectivity, resulting in increased runoff in
126 permafrost peatlands (Connon et al., 2014) or increased connectivity to regional hydrology
127 through thermo-erosion gullies or thaw slumps (Kokelj & Jorgenson, 2013) in tundra
128 ecosystems. Permafrost landscape dynamics, including the mode of permafrost thaw and
129 ecological conditions present following thaw, will play a key role in the biogeochemical and
130 eehydrological processes that constrain DOC mobilization, i.e., export and mineralization upon
131 export. The freshwater DOC pool represents a mix of C derived from a variety of ecosystem
132 types and sources, and the ecological conditions of each source will have a significant impact on
133 the quantity and quality of this mobilized DOC. Determining the relative contribution and impact
134 on mineralization of these DOC sources represents a potentially important step in reducing
135 uncertainty in the permafrost climate feedback.

136 Here, we conduct a systematic review of the literature and compiled 111 studies published
137 between 2000 – 2022 on DOC concentrations in the top 3 m of soil in terrestrial ecosystems
138 found in the northern circumpolar permafrost region. Our aim was to build a database to assess
139 the concentration and mobilization of DOC across terrestrial permafrost ecosystems. We used

140 this database to address the following hypotheses: (i) the highest DOC concentrations would be
141 found in organic rich wetland ecosystems; (ii) disturbance would lead to increased export and
142 biodegradability of DOC; and (iii) the most biodegradable DOC would be found in Yedoma and
143 tundra ecosystems. A quantitative assessment of studies pertaining to DOC concentrations in
144 permafrost soils can identify evidence-based recommendations for future topics, standardisation
145 of methods, and areas of research to improve our understanding on terrestrial and aquatic
146 biogeochemical cycling in northern permafrost regions. Our database contains ancillary data
147 describing the geographical and ecological conditions associated with each DOC concentration,
148 allowing us to reveal patterns in DOC concentrations and lability measures for 562 sampling
149 sites across multiple ecosystem types and under varying disturbance regimes. This study
150 represents the first systematic review of DOC concentrations within terrestrial permafrost
151 ecosystems found in the circumpolar north. As such, it provides unique and valuable insights into
152 identifying ~~ecoregion ecosystems, or landscape characteristics~~, associated with the highest DOC
153 concentrations, and thus regions ecosystems with the greatest potential for DOC mobilization.
154 ~~We hypothesized that (i) the highest DOC concentrations would be found in organic rich wetland~~
155 ~~ecosystems, (ii) disturbance would lead to increased export and biodegradability of DOC, and~~
156 ~~(iii) the most biodegradable DOC would be found in Yedoma and tundra ecosystems.~~

Commented [LH2]: In intro add in text about how some studies show increased lability whereas other show the opposite, talks about fresh inputs but also the sorption (or desorption) to minerals following thaw or export to aquatic network

157 2. Methods

158 This systematic review used a methodological framework proposed by Arksey &
159 O'Malley (2005) and follows five steps: 1) develop research questions and a search query; 2)
160 identify relevant studies; 3) study selection; 4) data extraction; and 5) data analysis, summary,
161 and reporting. The literature search was guided by four research questions: 1) what are the
162 concentrations of DOC found in terrestrial ecosystems across the northern circumpolar
163 permafrost region?; 2) what are the rates of export and/or degradation (mobilization) of DOC
164 within these ecosystems?; 3) What are the major controls on DOC concentrations and rates of
165 mobilization?; and 4) how are concentrations and mobilization rates impacted by thermokarst
166 formation? Mobilization rates represent DOC loss and include specific discharge of DOC (g
167 DOC m⁻²), export rate of DOC per day (g C m⁻² day⁻¹) and per year (g C m⁻² year⁻¹), and
168 biodegradable DOC (BDOC; %).

169 2.1 Literature Search

170 Based on *a priori* tests, we used the following search query string to find papers using
 171 information found in their title, abstract, and keywords: ("dissolved organic carbon") AND
 172 (permafrost OR thermokarst OR "thaw slump") AND (soil OR peat) AND (export OR degrad*
 173 OR decomposition OR mineralization). We used Web of Science, Science Direct, Scopus,
 174 PubMed, and Google Scholar to generate a database of tier 1, peer-reviewed articles published
 175 between 2000 – 2022. The search function on Science Direct does not support the use of
 176 wildcards such as "*", so "degrad*" was changed to "degradation". We removed duplicate
 177 references found across multiple databases using Mendeley© referencing software (v1.17.1,
 178 Mendeley Ltd. 2016). ~~Once this initial database was compiled, w~~We used the same search query
 179 string as above to search for ~~additional~~ articles on the first 15 pages of Google Scholar. This
 180 resulted in the addition of a further 150 articles to be included in our systematic screening
 181 process.

182 2.2 Systematic Screening of Peer-Reviewed Publications

183 The selection of relevant studies was comprised of inclusion criteria and relevance
 184 screening in three steps. In the first step we placed limits on initial study searches in the
 185 electronic databases mentioned above. Studies were included in the review if they were primary
 186 research, published in English, and published between 2000 – 2022 (Table 1). Only quantitative
 187 studies conducted in terrestrial ecosystems within the northern circumpolar permafrost region, as
 188 defined by Brown et al., (1997), and reporting DOC concentration and mobilization rates were
 189 included. Studies not meeting these criteria were eliminated and the remaining studies proceeded
 190 to the second screening step.

Table 1. Summary of criteria used to identify suitable studies in the preliminary screening stage

| | Inclusion criteria | Exclusion criteria |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Timeline | Study published between 2000 – 2022 | Study published prior to 2000 |
| Study type | Primary research article published in peer-reviewed journal using quantitative methods | Thesis/dissertations and secondary research studies (reviews, commentaries, editorials) |
| Language | Published in English | Studies published in other languages |

| | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| Region | Conducted within the northern circumpolar permafrost region | Conducted outside of the northern circumpolar permafrost region |
| Outcome | Studies on DOC concentration, export or degradation in permafrost environments | Studies not on DOC concentration, export or degradation in permafrost environments |

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192 In the second step, the primary relevance of articles was screened, based on article titles,
 193 abstracts, and keywords, and the eligibility criteria provided in Table 2. Studies deemed
 194 irrelevant were eliminated and the remaining studies proceeded to the third and final screening
 195 step, or secondary screening stage, which was based on was based on more specific eligibility
 196 criteria (Table 2) applied to the full text.

Table 2. Primary and secondary relevance screening tools. Primary screening tool used in the article title, abstract, and keyword screening stage. Secondary screening tool used in full-text screening stage

| Screening stage | Screening questions | Response details |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Primary | Does the study involve quantitative data collected from a permafrost environment? | Yes – reports on quantitative data collected from a permafrost environment No – does not report on the above |
| Primary and Secondary | Is the study region within the northern circumpolar permafrost region? | Yes – reports on quantitative data (including field observations and lab data) collected from the circumpolar permafrost environment. No – study region is not in the northern circumpolar permafrost regions; other examples could be mountainous permafrost or Tibetan plateau |
| Primary and Secondary | Is the article in English and NOT a review, book chapter, commentary, correspondence, letter, editorial, case report, or reflection? | Yes – study is in English and is a primary research article that includes quantitative studies (field and lab based), including model-based research as it relies on observational data.* No – study is not in English and/or is a review, book, editorial, working paper, commentary, conference proceeding, supplementary text, or qualitative study which does not address outcomes relevant to this review |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Primary and Secondary | Does the study involve the concentration, export or degradation of terrestrially derived DOC? | Yes – reports on terrestrial DOC concentration, export, or degradation, including concentrations and characterization No – does not report on terrestrial DOC concentration, export, or degradation |
| Secondary | Is the article in English, longer than 500 words, and published between 2000 - 2022? | Yes – study is published between 2000 – 2022 No – study is published prior to 2000 |

197 *For model-based studies, the original field/lab data used to parametrise or develop the model
 198 was used. If this data was taken from previously published work, then those studies were used
 199 and the model-based study removed.

200 *2.3 Database compilation*

201 A database with reported DOC concentrations and mobilization rates i.e., rates of either
 202 DOC export or degradation, was compiled using data from all studies that were deemed relevant
 203 following the study selection phase. The database was compiled to compare DOC concentrations
 204 and mobilization rates between different sites. We define a site as an area where either soil,
 205 water, or ice samples were taken from that has similar vegetation composition, water table
 206 position, permafrost regime, and was either disturbed or pristine. Site descriptions were derived
 207 from the text of each study. Where possible, individual daily measurements of DOC
 208 concentrations and mobilization rates were taken. When replicates of the same daily
 209 measurement were provided, we used the mean of those replicates, which was relevant for 10
 210 studies within the database, representing 72 DOC concentrations. All data was extracted from
 211 data tables, text, supplementary material, or extracted from data figures using WebPlotDigitizer
 212 (<https://automeris.io/WebPlotDigitizer>).

213 All studies reported measuring DOC concentrations collected from either open-water, pore
 214 water, ice, or soil using a median filter pore size of 0.45 µm with first and third quartiles pore
 215 size of 0.45 and 0.7 µm. Measurements from all 12 months of the year were included in the
 216 database with the majority occurring during the growing season (May – August), a small portion
 217 during the non-growing season, and the remaining sampling times were either not reported or are
 218 averages over multiple sampling occasions. We included data from studies that were both field

219 and lab based. However, any data where a treatment was applied was excluded, except for
220 temperature treatments during incubation experiments when assessing the biodegradability of
221 DOC. When lab-based studies included an incubation, only Day 0 DOC concentrations were
222 used when comparing DOC concentrations across studies. We chose to remove any DOC
223 concentrations from samples taken below 3 m depth, which represented 3% of all DOC
224 measurements. These measurements were removed for better comparability with the current best
225 estimation of soil organic carbon stocks within the northern circumpolar permafrost zone
226 (Hugelius et al., 2014). We also removed any DOC concentrations greater than 500 mg L⁻¹,
227 which represented 2% of all DOC concentrations. Samples that were above 500 mg L⁻¹ and were
228 sampled below 3 m represented 1% of all DOC concentrations.

229 Site averaged daily DOC concentrations (mg L⁻¹) and mobilization rates were estimated from
230 the average concentration and mobilization rates measured within a single day or sampling
231 occasion. Repeated measurements at a site, either over the growing season or multiyear
232 measurements, were treated as an individual estimate of DOC concentrations and mobilization
233 rates. Other continuous variables that were similarly estimated include soil moisture, water table
234 position, organic layer depth, active layer depth, bulk density of soil, soil carbon content (%),
235 soil nitrogen content (%), carbon:nitrogen, pH, electrical conductivity (μS cm⁻¹), specific UV
236 absorbance at 254 nm (SUVA; L mg C⁻¹ m⁻¹), total dissolved nitrogen (mg L⁻¹), nitrate (mg L⁻¹),
237 ammonium (mg L⁻¹), chloride (mg L⁻¹), calcium (mg L⁻¹), and magnesium (mg L⁻¹). [The](#)
238 [aromatic content of organic matter is positively correlated with SUVA \(Weishaar et al., 2003\),](#)
239 [with high SUVA values being used as an indication of high aromatic content \(Hansen et al.,](#)
240 [2016\). Ratios of C:N have been shown to be a good proxy for decomposition \(Biester et al.,](#)
241 [2014\), where high C:N values indicate higher decomposition.](#) Mean annual temperatures and
242 precipitation, sampling depth, filter size, the number of days over which sampling took place,
243 how many years following disturbance measurements were taken were also recorded. Several
244 continuous variables other than those mentioned above were also recorded in the database, but
245 not used for analysis if they represented < 20% of the database. We chose 20% as the cut-off
246 point for use in comparison of the relationship between DOC concentrations and mobilization
247 with other site continuous variables.

248 Categorical variables included in the database were site location within the permafrost zone
249 (continuous, discontinuous, sporadic; Brown et al., 1997) and ecoregion (arctic tundra, sub-arctic
250 tundra, sub-arctic boreal, and continental boreal; Olson et al., 2001). We included site surface
251 permafrost conditions (present or absent), the thermal horizon layer sampled (active layer,
252 permafrost, permafrost free, water, and thaw stream), and if present what type of disturbance
253 occurred at the site (fire, active layer thickening, thermokarst terrestrial, or thermokarst aquatic).
254 Active layer represents the seasonally unfrozen soil layer above the permafrost layer. Permafrost
255 Lens represents the permanently frozen (below 0 °C) layer. Permafrost lens DOC concentrations
256 are determined from soil and pore water within the permafrost layer and extracted via frozen
257 cores, whereas active layer samples are taken from soil cores or porewater that are unfrozen at
258 the time of sampling. Thaw Stream represents flowing surface waters following permafrost thaw.
259 Permafrost Free represents areas that are not underlain by permafrost. We also included the soil
260 class found at the site (Histel, Histosol, Orthel, and Turbel; USDA, 1999) and whether the DOC
261 was from the organic or mineral soil. Histosols are organic rich, non-permafrost soils. Histels,
262 Orthels, and Turbels are permafrost-affected soils (Gelisol order). Histels are organic rich,
263 Orthels are non cryoturbated affected mineral soils, and Turbels are cryoturbated permafrost
264 soils. Organic rich Histel and Histosol soils have been previously shown to contain greater SOC
265 stocks in the top 3 m of soil than the mineral rich Orthel and Histel soils (Hugelius et al., 2014).
266 To assess the influence of sampling approach and method of analysis, we included method of
267 DOC extraction (centrifugation of soil sample, leaching and dry leaching of soil, dialysis, grab
268 sample, ice core extraction, potassium sulphate extraction, lysimeter, piezometer, pump, rhizons)
269 and DOC measurement method (combustion, persulphate, photometric, or solid-phase
270 extraction).

271 Sites were classified according to ecosystem type, and these included coastal tundra, forest,
272 peatland, permafrost bog, permafrost wetland, retrogressive thaw slump, upland tundra, and
273 Yedoma. Ecosystem classification is based on the general site description in the article, the
274 provided ecosystem classification within the article, and site data including vegetation
275 composition, permafrost conditions, and ecoregion. Coastal tundra sites includes typical
276 polygonal tundra features found along the coastline in the permafrost region (Lantuit et al.,
277 2012). Forests include any forested ecosystem, such as a black spruce forest (Kane et al., 2006)

278 or larch forest (Kawahigashi et al., 2011) where the soil is not a wetland soil. Peatlands are sites
279 classified as either fens (Olefeldt and Roulet 2012) or bogs (Olsrund and Christensen 2011) that
280 are within the permafrost domain but are not underlain by permafrost. Permafrost bogs are sites
281 that are bogs and are either underlain by permafrost (O'Donnel et al., 2016) or are thermokarst
282 bogs (Burd et al., 2020) that were previously underlain by permafrost prior to thawing.
283 Permafrost wetlands sites include saturated soils that are underlain by permafrost, or were
284 previously underlain by permafrost prior to permafrost thaw. They contain sampling locations
285 typical of moist acidic tundra (Trusiak et al., 2018), tundra meadows (Tanski et al., 2017), and
286 high-latitude fens (Nielsen et al., 2017). Retrogressive thaw slumps are areas where substantial
287 ground ice degradation leads to thermokarst and the resulting feature contains a retreating
288 headwall (Abbott et al., 2015). Upland tundra sites are high-latitude, non-wetland, mineral soils
289 that include tundra heath (Stutter and Billett 2003) and meadows (Hirst et al., 2022). Yedoma
290 sites include pristine forest, upland tundra, and coastal tundra, as well as retrogressive thaw
291 slumps and other thermokarst features found within the Yedoma permafrost domain (Strauss et
292 al., 2021). The ecosystem classification retrogressive thaw slump only includes these
293 thermokarst features found outside the Yedoma permafrost domain. Each ecosystem type was
294 further classified based on the type of permafrost thaw or thermokarst formation that occurred
295 there. These thaw or thermokarst types included thermokarst bog, thermokarst wetland, active
296 layer thickening, retrogressive thaw slump, exposure, thermo-erosion gully, and active layer
297 detachment.

298 *2.4 Database analysis*

299 All statistical analyses were carried out in R (Version 3.4.4, R Core Team, 2015). We aimed
300 to assess how DOC concentrations differed across study regions and ecosystems. To do this
301 We used Kruskal-Wallis analysis to test for differences in median DOC concentrations among
302 the various ~~categorical variables~~ study regions and areas ~~such that included as~~ permafrost zones,
303 ecoregions, soil class, thermal horizon, and ecosystems. Post-hoc comparisons of median DOC
304 concentrations among these categories were performed using pairwise Wilcox test. Within and
305 between each ecosystem type we assessed the differences in DOC concentrations found in
306 different thermal horizons (i.e., active layer and permafrost lens). To do this ~~For regression~~
307 analysis, data was first transformed using a Box Cox transformation and the optimal λ using the

308 MASS package (Ripley et al., 2019). We ~~then used~~ performed analysis of covariance (ANCOVA)
309 to test for differences in DOC concentrations in different thermal horizons between ecosystem
310 types, while controlling for seasonal effects by including the month in which sampling occurred
311 as the covariate.

312 Following the assessment of differences in DOC concentrations across these study regions
313 and ecosystems we aimed to assess the influence of extraction and analysis method on DOC
314 concentrations. The aim of this was to determine if extraction and analysis method was having a
315 greater effect on DOC concentrations than study region or ecosystem. To do so we first used
316 ANOVAs and Bonferroni post-hoc tests on linear mixed effects models, that include either
317 extraction method, filter size, or analysis method as a fixed effect and ecosystem type as a
318 random factor, to evaluate significant differences in DOC concentrations between DOC
319 extraction and measurement methods. We then performed Kruskal-Wallis analysis to test for
320 differences in median DOC concentrations among the extraction method, filter size, and analysis
321 method in each permafrost zone, ecoregion, soil class, thermal horizon, and ecosystem. Post-hoc
322 comparisons of median DOC concentrations among these categories were performed using
323 pairwise Wilcox test.

324 We used partial least squares regression (PLS) ~~to assess when assessing the performance~~
325 ~~of relationship of DOC concentrations with~~ continuous and categorical variables. We performed
326 this analysis in to determine how the drivers of DOC concentrations across ecosystems
327 ~~predicting may explain the variability in~~ DOC concentrations. Predictor variables were
328 categorized based on their Variable Importance in Projections (VIP) method in the *plsVarSel*
329 package (Mehmood et al., 2012), whereby variables with a score > 0.6 – 1 are deemed to be
330 significant (Chong and Jun 2005). We ran several PLS including predictor variables with a VIP
331 of > 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9, and 1. The most parsimonious PLS model contained predictor variables
332 with a VIP > 1 and was selected based on the proportion of variability in the predictors explained
333 by the model, significant PLS components, O^2 , and background correlation (Andersen and Bro
334 2010). PLS was performed using the *pls* package (Mevik & Wehrens, 2007) and we chose to use
335 PLS as it is tolerant of co-correlation of predictor variable, deviations from normality, and
336 missing values, all of which were found within the database. In the PLS ecosystem classes were
337 subdivided into pristine or disturbed (i.e., impacted by permafrost thaw). Pristine sites were

338 further subdivided by the thermal horizon in which the DOC concentrations were measured
339 (active layer and permafrost lens). Sites were split into disturbed and pristine to assess whether
340 disturbances has an impact on DOC concentrations. Pristine sites were divided by their thermal
341 horizon to assess whether DOC concentrations were more positively related to the active layer
342 exposed to both microbial decomposition and fresh annual carbon inputs from surface
343 vegetation, or the permafrost lens.

344 To evaluate the change in ecosystem DOC concentrations following thermokarst formation,
345 based on all studies from the systematic review, we calculated the response ratio using the
346 *SingleCaseES* package (Pustejovsky et al., 2021). We define thermokarst as the process by which
347 ice-rich permafrost deposits undergo complete thaw, resulting in surface subsidence and the
348 formation of a new, thermokarst feature that is ecological different regarding water table
349 position, redox conditions, and vegetation type, from the preceding pristine ecosystem. Very few
350 studies in our database report DOC concentrations for both pristine and thermokarst affected
351 ecosystem (< 20 %). To include as much data as possible we chose an effect size metric that is
352 unlikely to be influenced by studies with large sample number and variance. The response ratio
353 is;

$$354 \text{ Pristine to Thermokarst Effect Response ratio} = \ln\left(\frac{X_P}{X_T}\right) \quad \text{Eqn. 1}$$

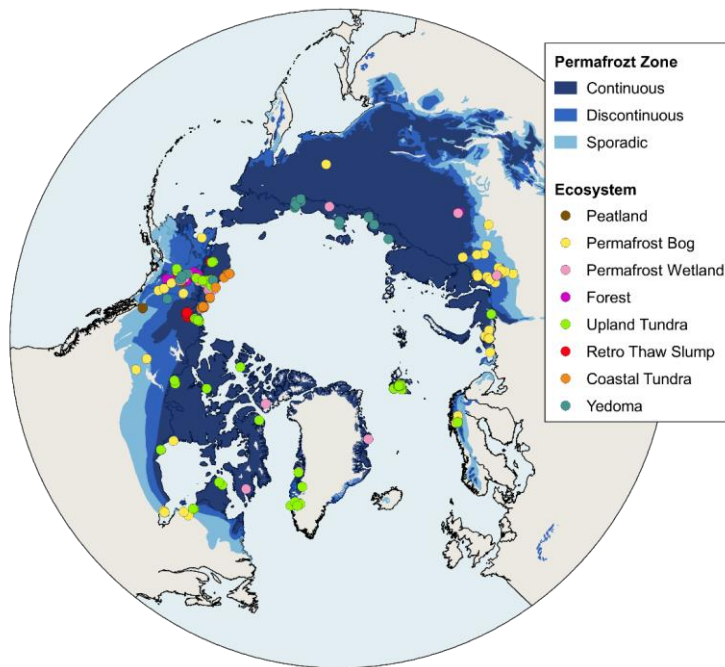
355 where X_P = mean DOC concentration of pristine ecosystems and X_T = mean DOC concentration of
356 thermokarst effected ecosystems (Lajeunesse, 2011). This represents the log proportional
357 difference in mean DOC concentrations between thermokarst and pristine ecosystems, where a
358 positive response ratio indicates a decrease in DOC concentrations following thermokarst.

359 The distribution of the data was inspected visually and with the Shapiro–Wilk test. We tested
360 homogeneity of variances using the *car* package and Levene’s test (Fox and Weisberg, 2011).
361 We report DOC concentrations as the median value with uncertainty using as ± the interquartile
362 range ~~(lower, median, and upper quartiles)~~, except for response ratios which we report as ± 95%
363 confidence intervals. We here define the statistical significance level at 5%.

364 **3. Results**

365 **3.1 Database generation**

366 Our initial search using Web of Knowledge, Science Direct, Scopus, PubMed, and
367 Google Scholar returned a total of 577 unique papers published between 2000 – 2022 that assess
368 the concentrations and rates of mobilization of DOC in terrestrial ecosystems within the northern
369 circumpolar permafrost region. Of these initial 577 studies, 111 remained after the systematic
370 screening process (Table 1 & 2). From these 111 studies we generated our database. The final
371 database of 111 studies contained a total of 3,340 DOC concentrations (mg L^{-1}), with 2,845 DOC
372 concentrations between 0 – 500 mg L^{-1} , found within the top 3 m of permafrost soils from field
373 and lab-based studies (using only Day 0 lab-based DOC concentrations). These concentrations
374 were taken from 562 different sampling locations, representing 8 different ecosystem types
375 (Figure 1; [Table S1](#)) across the northern circumpolar permafrost region. All studies except, for
376 one (Olefeldt et al., 2012), reported DOC concentrations.



377

378 Figure 1. Map of sampling locations where DOC measurements (n=562) from the top 3 m for
379 each ecosystem type. In many cases, the same sampling location was used in multiple studies
380 leading to some overlap, therefore the number of sampling sites included in the data set (562)
381 are not all clearly identifiable from this map. Similarly, several points overlay others even when
382 the ecosystems differ. For a full list of site coordinates please see the database (repository link).
383 Retro Thaw Slump = Retrogressive Thaw Slump. Blue shading represents permafrost zonation
384 (Brown et al., 1997).

385

386 The final database contained a considerably lower number of DOC mobilization
387 measurements. The database includes 16 measurements of specific discharge of DOC (g DOC m^{-2})
388 from 3 studies, 9 export rate of DOC per day ($\text{g C m}^{-2} \text{ day}^{-1}$) and per year ($\text{g C m}^{-2} \text{ year}^{-1}$)
389 measurements were each found in 2 studies. The number of specific discharge, export of DOC
390 per day, and export of DOC per year measurements combined were <1% of the number of DOC
391 concentration measurements. As such they were not considered for analysis of DOC
392 mobilization. A total of 146 BDOC (%) measurements, 4% of the total number of DOC
393 concentration measurements, were found in 14 studies. These measurements of BDOC were
394 from Yedoma (30:5, number of measurements:studies), Upland Tundra (55:5), Forest (18:3),
395 Permafrost Wetland (12:2), and Permafrost Bog (31:5) ecosystems. Given the low number of
396 other forms of DOC mobilization and relatively comparable spread of BDOC measurements
397 across ecosystem types, we chose to include BDOC measurements in our analysis despite a low
398 total number of measurements compared to DOC concentrations, and we consider this lower
399 sample size during our interpretation of results.

400 Filter size used in studies ranged from 0.15 – 0.7 μm . The majority of DOC
401 concentrations reported were determined using a filter size of 0.45 μm (58%), 0.7 μm was the
402 second most common filter size (21%), followed by 0.22 μm (14%). We identified eleven
403 different DOC extraction methods in total from both soils and water that are broadly grouped
404 into the following six extraction types: leaching, suction, grab, centrifuged, dialysis, and
405 potassium sulphate (K_2SO_4) extraction. Leaching includes the leaching and dry leaching of soil;
406 suction includes lysimeter, piezometer, pump, and rhizons; grab includes grab samples and ice
407 core extraction; and centrifuged, dialysis, and (K_2SO_4) extraction remain on their own. Suction
408 (42%), leaching (37%), and grab (14%) were the three most common extraction methods across
409 all samples. Leaching and suction extraction methods were used for 66% and 24%, respectively.

410 for all soil samples. For water samples, suction (65%) and grab (31%) were the most common
411 extraction methods. The most common measurement method to determine DOC concentrations
412 was by the combustion method (89%), followed by the persulphate (9%) and photometric (1%)
413 methods.

414 Filter size used in studies ranged from 0.15–0.7 μm . The majority of studies used a filter
415 size of 0.45 μm (1,375 out of 2,845 DOC measurements), 0.7 μm was the second most common
416 filter size ($n = 489$), followed by 0.22 μm ($n = 332$) and 0.6 μm ($n = 143$). Two studies used a
417 filter size of 0.15 μm totalling 18 DOC measurements and remaining studies ($n = 12$) did not
418 provide a filter size. DOC concentrations were found to differ between different filter sizes
419 (ANOVA: $F_{(4, 2339)} = 22.9, p < 0.001$). DOC concentrations from samples filtered using 0.7 μm
420 were lower (median = 11 mg L^{-1}) than 0.45 μm and 0.22 μm filtered samples (median = 53 and
421 42 mg L^{-1} , respectively). We consider the effects of filter size to be minor. DOC concentrations
422 were found to be significantly different between samples subject to the 11 different extraction
423 methods used (ANOVA: $F_{(10, 2515)} = 21.8, p < 0.001$), and between water based and soil (solid)
424 based extraction methods (ANOVA: $F_{(1, 2524)} = 182.1, p < 0.001$). Median DOC concentrations of
425 the 4 methods of extraction directly from soils (leaching from soil under field moisture
426 conditions, leached from dried soils, centrifuged soils, and extracted using K_2SO_4) were 57 mg
427 L^{-1} , with upper and lower quartiles of 20 and 120 mg L^{-1} , respectively. The 7 water based
428 extraction methods had a median DOC concentration of 24 mg L^{-1} , with upper and lower
429 quartiles of 8 and 59 mg L^{-1} , respectively. DOC concentrations differed (ANOVA: $F_{(3, 2515)} =$
430 $36.2, p < 0.001$) between samples subject to different dissolved organic carbon measurement
431 methods, with median values of 37 and 48 mg L^{-1} for the combustion, and photometric methods,
432 respectively. Median values measured using the persulphate were higher at 97 mg L^{-1} .
433 Combustion was the most common method, accounting for 2,170 DOC concentrations, followed
434 by persulphate ($n = 230$) and photometric ($n = 31$). In this study we did not focus on
435 systematically testing the effect of filter sizes, extraction methods, or DOC measurement
436 methods. Our goal was to assess the concentration and mobilization of DOC in terrestrial
437 permafrost ecosystems and the assessment of methods is outside the scope of our study. Rather,
438 we compare DOC concentrations collected from samples using a variety of these methods and

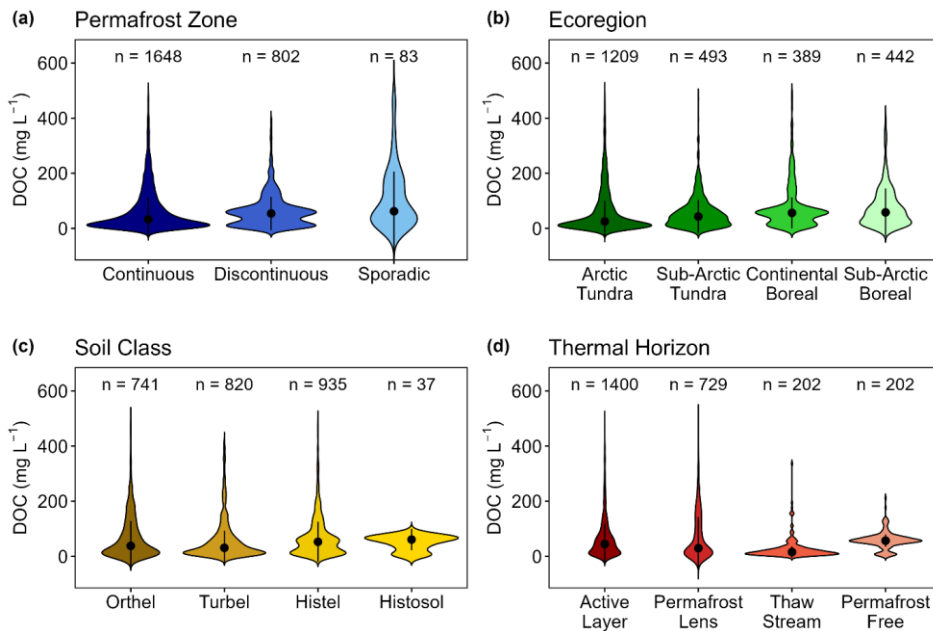
439 ~~suggest that future studies use this information to decide on methods to be consistent with~~
440 ~~compiled measurements, thus far.~~

441 3.2 DOC concentrations and study regions

442 Upon inspection of DOC concentrations in the database, we determined that the data was
443 non-normally distributed. The DOC concentrations were skewed toward the lower end of our 0 –
444 500 mg L⁻¹ range; thus, we report median, upper, and lower quartiles below. Across all studies,
445 within the top 3 m of soil, the median DOC concentration was 41 \pm 74 mg L⁻¹, ~~with upper and~~
446 ~~lower quartiles of 12 and 86 mg L⁻¹, respectively.~~ DOC concentrations were found to differ
447 among the three permafrost zones (chi-square = 32, df = 2, $p < 0.001$; Figure 2a). The highest
448 median DOC concentrations were found within the sporadic permafrost zone (n = 83; 62 \pm 144
449 mg L⁻¹), ~~lower quartile (LQ) and upper quartile (UQ) of 23 and 167 mg L⁻¹, respectively.~~ The
450 lowest median of 33 \pm 77 mg L⁻¹ (~~LQ and UQ of 11 and 88 mg L⁻¹, respectively~~) was found in
451 the continuous permafrost zone (n = 1,648), with the greatest density of samples having lower
452 DOC concentrations than observed in the violin plots of both the discontinuous and sporadic
453 (Figure 2a). This change in DOC concentration's along the latitudinal gradient of the permafrost
454 zonation was also seen in the latitudinal gradient associated with ecoregion, where Arctic Tundra
455 and Sub-Arctic Tundra are found at higher latitudes than both boreal ecoregions (chi-square =
456 78, df = 3, $p < 0.001$; Figure 2b). The highest DOC concentrations were found in the continental
457 boreal (n = 389; 56 \pm 56 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 24 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 80 mg L⁻¹~~) and Sub-Arctic Boreal (n =
458 442; 58 \pm 97 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 20 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 107 mg L⁻¹~~) ecoregions, and lowest in the Arctic
459 Tundra (n = 1,209; 25 \pm 75 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 9 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 84 mg L⁻¹~~) and Sub-Arctic Tundra (n =
460 493; 43 \pm 61 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 15 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 76 mg L⁻¹~~) ecoregions. Inspection of the distribution
461 of DOC concentrations across the ecoregions highlights that the Arctic Tundra ecoregion had the
462 highest density of samples at the lowest DOC concentration (Figure 2b).

463 These latitudinal differences are also reflected in the observed differences (chi-square =
464 20, df = 3, $p < 0.001$) in DOC concentrations found within different soil classes. The highest
465 DOC concentrations are found within organic rich Histosol (n = 37; 61 \pm 39 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 32 mg~~
466 ~~L⁻¹; UQ = 71 mg L⁻¹~~) and Histel soils (n = 935; 53 \pm 72 mg L⁻¹, ~~LQ = 16 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 88 mg L⁻¹~~
467 \pm ; Figure 2c), with the distribution of the data from these soils types having a higher density at

468 greater DOC concentrations (Figure 2c). Histel and Histosol soils are the main type of
 469 permafrost soil found within the sporadic and discontinuous permafrost zone and both boreal
 470 ecoregions (Hugelius et al., 2014). Mineral rich Orthels (n = 741; 38 ± 91 mg L⁻¹; LQ = 11 mg L⁻¹;
 471 UQ = 102 mg L⁻¹) and Turbels (n = 820; 31 ± 62 mg L⁻¹; LQ = 12 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 74 mg L⁻¹),
 472 mineral permafrost soils that have experienced cryoturbation, had the lowest DOC
 473 concentrations. The median DOC concentrations found within the top 3 m of these soil classes
 474 represent <1% of the soil organic carbon stock found in the top 3 m of each soil class (Hugelius
 475 et al., 2014). DOC concentrations also differed within the thermal horizon of these different soil
 476 classes (chi-square = 91, df = 3, $p < 0.001$; Figure 2d). The highest DOC concentrations were
 477 found in permafrost free sites (n = 202; 57 ± 22 mg L⁻¹; LQ = 47 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 69 mg L⁻¹),
 478 which were largely Histosol soils (19%) or Histel soils (74%) that have experienced thermokarst
 479 formation. In areas where permafrost was present, DOC concentrations were highest in the active
 480 layer (n = 1,400; 45 ± 74 mg L⁻¹; LQ = 14 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 88 mg L⁻¹) and the permafrost lens (n =
 481 729; 30 ± 113 mg L⁻¹; LQ = 10 mg L⁻¹; UQ = 123 mg L⁻¹).



482

483 Figure 2. Violin plots of DOC concentrations (mg L^{-1}) found in the top 3 m across (a) permafrost
484 zones, (b) ecoregions, (c) soil classes, and (d) thermal horizons. (a) Dark to light blue shading
485 represents the permafrost zones Continuous, Discontinuous, and Sporadic, according to Brown
486 et al., (1997). (b) Dark to light green shading represents the ecoregions Arctic Tundra, Sub-
487 Arctic Tundra, Continental Boreal, and Sub-Arctic Boreal, according to Olson et al., (2001). (c)
488 Dark to light yellow shading represents the soil classes Histosol, Histel, Orthel, and Turbel,
489 according to the USDA Soil Taxonomy (USDA, 1999). ~~Histosols are organic rich, non-~~
490 ~~permafrost soil. Histols, Orthels, and Turbels are permafrost-affected soils (Gelisol order).~~
491 ~~Histosols are organic rich, Orthels are non cryoturbated affected mineral soils, and Turbels are~~
492 ~~eryoturbated permafrost soils.~~ (d) Dark to light red shading represents the thermal horizons
493 Active Layer, Permafrost Lens, Thaw Stream, and Permafrost Free. ~~Active layer represents the~~
494 ~~seasonally unfrozen soil layer above the permafrost layer. Permafrost Lens represents the~~
495 ~~permanently frozen (below 0°C) layer. Thaw Stream represents flowing surface waters following~~
496 ~~permafrost thaw. Permafrost Free represents areas that are not underlain by permafrost.~~ Black
497 dots on each violin plot represents the median. Black vertical lines represent the interquartile
498 range with the upper and lower limits representing the 75th and 25th percentiles, respectively.
499 Either side of the black vertical line represents a kernel density estimation. This shape shows
500 the distribution of the data, with wider areas representing a higher probability that samples
501 within the database will have that DOC concentrations. The number of samples (n) found in
502 each sub-category is found above each corresponding violin plot.

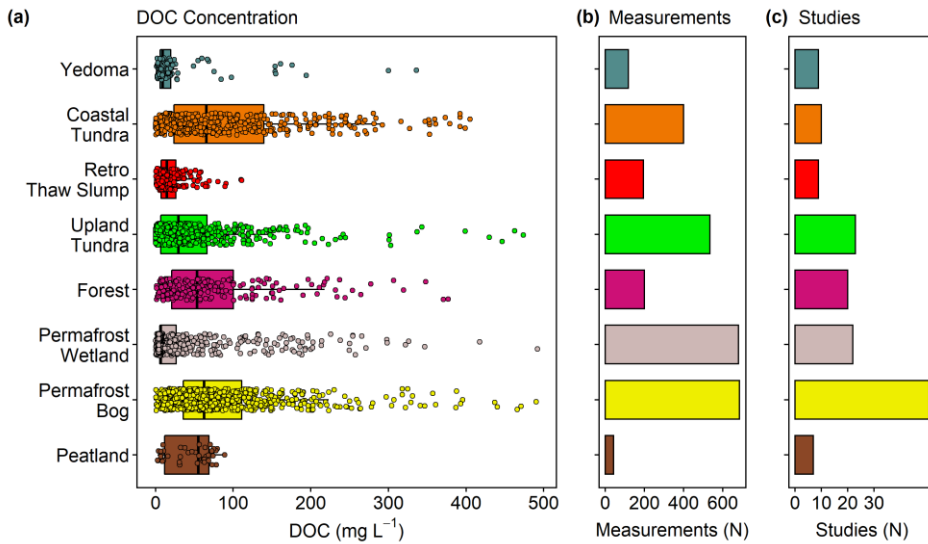
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504 3.3 Trends in DOC concentrations across ecosystems

505 Similar to other categorical variables (i.e. permafrost zone, ecoregion, soil class, and
506 thermal horizon data), DOC concentrations within each of the eight ecosystem types were found
507 to be non-normally distributed, with median values skewed toward the lower end of the 0 – 500
508 mg L^{-1} range of concentrations (~~Figure A~~Figure S1). Permafrost bogs, upland tundra, and
509 permafrost wetlands were the most represented in the database with regards to DOC
510 concentrations (Table S1), ~~with a total of 685 concentrations from 38 studies and 679~~
511 ~~concentrations from 22 studies, respectively.~~ The majority of permafrost bog measurements
512 came from studies with field sites within Canada (Figure 1; Table S1), as was the case for upland
513 tundra and retrogressive thaw slump DOC concentration data. The majority of permafrost
514 wetland sample locations were found in Russia, whereas the majority of the ~~399-414~~ coastal
515 tundra sampling locations were in the USA. The least represented ecosystem classes included the
516 peatland ecosystem class, which is not strictly a permafrost ecosystem as the other are, and the
517 Yedoma ecosystem class (~~145-18~~ DOC concentrations from 9 studies, Table S1). DOC
518 concentrations differed significantly across the eight ecosystem types (chi-square = 700, df = 7, *p*

519 < 0.001; Figure 3). The highest DOC concentrations were found in coastal tundra (66 ± 116 mg
 520 L^{-1} ; $LQ = 24$ mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 140$ mg L^{-1}) and permafrost bogs (63 ± 75 mg L^{-1} ; $LQ = 36$ mg L^{-1} ;
 521 $UQ = 111$ mg L^{-1}) ecosystems. The lowest DOC concentrations were found in permafrost
 522 wetlands (7 ± 20 mg L^{-1} ; $LQ = 6$ mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 26$ mg L^{-1}) and Yedoma ecosystems (9 ± 18 mg
 523 L^{-1} ; $LQ = 2$ mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 20$ mg L^{-1}), both of which had only slightly lower median DOC
 524 concentrations than retrogressive thaw slumps (15 ± 21 mg L^{-1} ; $LQ = 7$ mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 26$ mg L^{-1}).

525



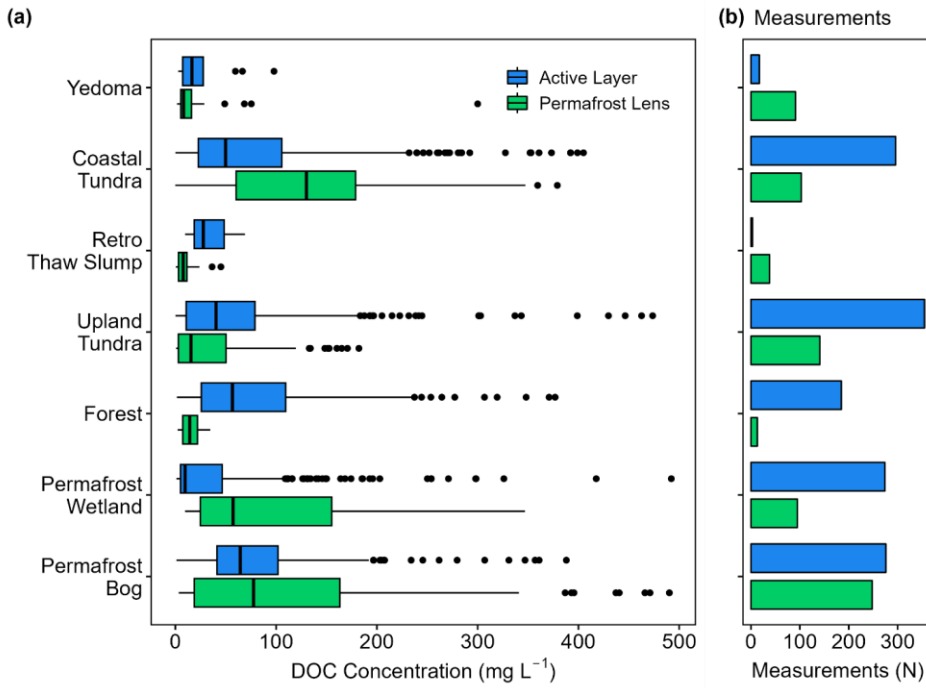
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527 Figure 3. Boxplot and jitter plot of (a) DOC concentrations (mg L⁻¹), (b) the number of DOC
 528 measurements, and (c) number of studies including DOC measurements were taken from the
 529 top 3 m for each ecosystem type. Retro Thaw Slump = Retrogressive Thaw Slump. Boxes
 530 represents the interquartile range (25 – 75%), with median shown as black horizontal line.
 531 Whiskers extend to 1.5 times the interquartile range (distance between first and third quartile) in
 532 each direction. Jitter points represent the concentration of each individual DOC measurement,
 533 with random variation applied to each points location vertically in the plot, to avoid overplotting.
 534 Yedoma = dark teal. Coastal Tundra = orange. Retro Thaw Slump = red. Upland Tundra =
 535 green. Forest = purple. Permafrost Wetland = light pink. Permafrost bog = yellow. Peatland =
 536 brown.

537

538 When grouping all DOC concentrations by ecosystem types and differentiating between
 539 the active layer and permafrost lens thermal horizons, we found that DOC concentrations
 540 differed between the active layer and permafrost lens for all ecosystems (ANCOVA: $F_{(1, 1277)} =$
 541 $49.8, p < 0.001$), except for permafrost bogs (chi-square = 0.37, $df = 1, p = 0.5$) and Yedoma
 542 (chi-square = 3.5, $df = 1, p = 0.06$) ecosystems (Figure 4). Within the permafrost lens thermal
 543 horizon, the highest DOC concentrations were found in coastal tundra ($n = 103; 130 \pm 119 \text{ mg L}^{-1};$
 544 $LQ = 60 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 179 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) and permafrost bogs ($n = 248; 78 \pm 144 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; LQ = 19$
 545 $\text{mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 163 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) sites, and lowest found in Yedoma sites ($n = 91; 8 \pm 10 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; LQ =$
 546 $6 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 16 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$). The highest active layer DOC concentrations were in permafrost
 547 bogs ($n = 276; 64 \pm 61 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; LQ = 41 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 102 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) and forest ($n = 185; 57 \pm 84$
 548 $\text{mg L}^{-1}; LQ = 26 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 110 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) sites, and lowest found in permafrost wetland sites (n
 549 $= 274; 10 \pm 42 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; LQ = 5 \text{ mg L}^{-1}; UQ = 47 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$).

550



551

552 Figure 4 . Boxplot of (a) DOC concentrations (mg L^{-1}) and (b) ~~(b)~~ the number of DOC
553 measurements in the Active Layer and Permafrost Lens thermal horizons of each ecosystem
554 type. Only DOC concentrations from ecosystems with these thermal horizons present is used,
555 thus no ~~peatland or~~ permafrost-free sites are included. Retro Thaw Slump = Retrogressive
556 Thaw Slump. Boxes represents the interquartile range (25 – 75%), with median shown as black
557 horizontal line. Whiskers extend to 1.5 times the interquartile range (distance between first and
558 third quartile) in each direction. Blue boxplots represent DOC concentrations in the active layer.
559 Green boxplots represent DOC concentrations in the permafrost lens.

561 3.4 Effect of extraction and analysis methods on DOC concentrations

562 We found that DOC concentrations differed between filter sizes (ANOVA: $F_{(4, 2339)} =$
563 22.9, $p < 0.001$) across. The highest DOC median concentrations reported were filtered using 0.45
564 μm ($53 \pm 78 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) and 0.22 μm ($42 \pm 54 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$) and lowest using 0.7 μm ($17 \pm 78 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$).
565 The majority of DOC concentrations were determined using 0.45, 0.7, and 0.22 μm filter sizes.
566 The trends observed in in DOC concentrations across study regions and ecosystems were also
567 found when exploring these trends for the three main filter sizes used (Table S2, S3). Using 0.45
568 and 0.7 μm filter sizes, which represents 79% of all reported DOC concentrations, we find that
569 DOC concentrations are generally higher in the discontinuous and sporadic permafrost zone, the
570 two boreal ecoregions, Histel soils, and the active layer thermal horizons (Table S2). Similarly,
571 the highest DOC concentrations using these two most common filter sizes were highest in
572 permafrost bog and coastal tundra ecosystems (Table S3). Given these similarities when
573 considering and not considering filter size, and the large variation in DOC concentrations within
574 each filter size, we consider the effect of filter size on the trends observed in DOC concentrations
575 across study regions and ecosystems reported above (Figure 2, 3) to be minor.

576 DOC concentrations were found to be significantly different between samples subject to
577 the six broader groups of extraction method used (ANOVA: $F_{(5, 2518)} = 30.8, p < 0.001$), and
578 between water based and soil (solid) based extraction methods (ANOVA: $F_{(1, 2524)} = 182.1, p <$
579 0.001). The trends observed in in DOC concentrations across study regions (Figure 2) and
580 ecosystems (Figure 3) were also found when exploring study region and ecosystem trends for the
581 three main DOC extraction methods used (Table S4, S5). We found that 93% of DOC
582 concentrations were determined using the suction (42%), leach (37%), and grab (14%) extraction
583 methods. Using these three most common approaches the highest DOC concentrations across

584 study regions (Table S4) and ecosystems (Table S5) were found in the discontinuous and
585 sporadic permafrost zone, the two boreal ecoregions, Histel soils, the active layer thermal
586 horizons, and in permafrost bog and coastal tundra ecosystems.

587 _____ The different methods of measuring DOC concentrations also produced significantly
588 different DOC concentrations (ANOVA: $F_{(3, 2515)} = 36.2, p < 0.001$). The three most common
589 accounted for 99% of all DOC concentrations and were combustion, persulphate, and
590 photometric. Of these three combustion was the most common and used for 89% of DOC
591 measurements. The persulphate and photometric methods were not used in all study regions
592 (Table S6) and ecosystems (Table S7), thus comparison of all three methods is not complete.
593 Trends in DOC measured using the combustion and persulphate method (Table S6, S7) were
594 similar to those found across study regions (Figure 2) and ecosystems (Figure 3). This is
595 unsurprising given that both of these methods account for 98% of all DOC concentrations.

596 _____ We consider the effect of filter size, extraction method, and method of DOC
597 measurement to be minor in determining trends in DOC concentrations across study regions and
598 ecosystems. We find that trends in DOC concentrations across study regions and ecosystems are
599 similar when you both consider and do not consider the methods used to determine those
600 concentrations. Also, the variability observed in DOC concentrations for each study region and
601 ecosystem remains high even when considering filter size, extraction method, and measurement
602 method. Thus, each method or approach similarly impacts DOC concentrations from each study
603 region and ecosystem, and cannot explain the DOC concentration variability observed within
604 each. However, these different approaches did have an impact on DOC concentrations. In this
605 study we did not focus on systematically testing the effect of filter sizes, extraction methods, or
606 DOC measurement methods. Our goal was to assess the concentration and mobilization of DOC
607 in terrestrial permafrost ecosystems across circumpolar regions and ecosystems. The assessment
608 of methods is outside the scope of our study. Rather, we compare DOC concentrations collected
609 from samples using a variety of these methods and suggest that future studies use this
610 information to decide on methods to be consistent with compiled measurements, thus far.

611 *3.5.4 Drivers of DOC concentrations*

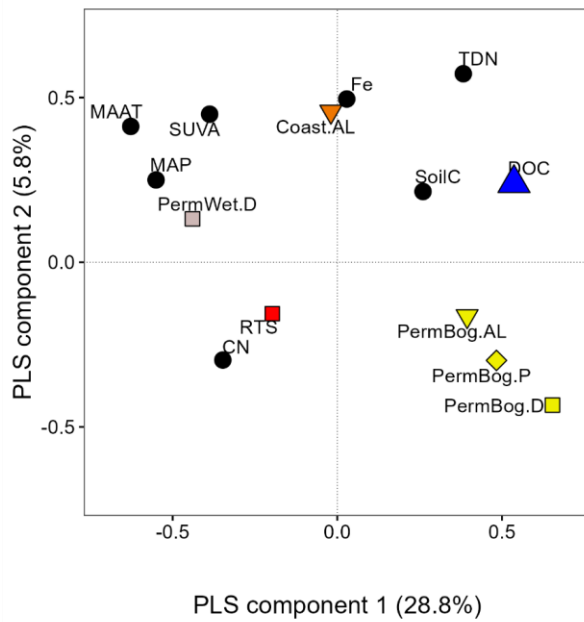
612 No continuous variables recorded in the dataset were available for all DOC concentration
613 database entries, with no sites containing data for all continuous variables. This limited our
614 ability to explore relationships between continuous environmental and ecological data and DOC
615 concentrations across the permafrost region. To address drivers of DOC concentrations across
616 the circumpolar permafrost region we used partial least squares regression (PLS) as it is tolerant
617 to missing values. Multiple PLS regressions were run using various combinations of continuous
618 and categorical data with similar model performance throughout. We chose the PLS to ~~predict~~
619 determine the drivers of DOC concentrations using environmental continuous variables and
620 ecosystem type as this contained the lowest background correlation. The most parsimonious PLS
621 regression extracted 95 significant components, captured 79% variation of the predictor
622 variables, and explained 37% of the variance in DOC concentrations in the dataset. The majority
623 of the variance in DOC (35%) is explained along the first two axes of the model. The model was
624 robust and not overfitted as model predictability was moderate ($Q^2 = 0.35$) and background
625 correlation was low (0.006).

626 The PLS plot (Figure 5a) shows the correlation between DOC concentrations and
627 selected environmental and ecological variables for the first two axes of the model. The two
628 variables with the greatest positive and negative ~~effect on relationship with~~ DOC concentrations
629 were total dissolved nitrogen content (mg L^{-1}) and C:N ratios, respectively (Figure 5b). The
630 positive relationship ~~between of~~ DOC ~~and with~~ total dissolved nitrogen ~~and~~ soil carbon content
631 (SoilC), and negative relationship with the specific UV absorbance at 254 nm (SUVA), may be a
632 result of ecosystem properties. The strong negative relationship with C:N ratios indicates that
633 DOC concentrations decrease with increased decomposition. Other than higher soil carbon
634 content (SoilC) in permafrost bogs, there was no clear or obvious observable trends in SoilC,
635 TDN, C:N ratios, and SUVA across ecosystem types (~~Figure A~~Figure S3). The PLS
636 demonstrates that ecosystem type strongly affects DOC concentrations, with DOC positively
637 related with the highest ecosystems where the highest DOC concentrations are observed,
638 permafrost bogs and coastal tundra, and negatively related to the lower DOC ecosystems,
639 permafrost wetland and retrogressive thaw slumps (Figure 5). This negative relationship may be
640 due to the higher latitudes these ecosystems are generally found at, which is supported by the
641 negative relationship with DOC and the climate indicators mean annual temperature (MAAT)

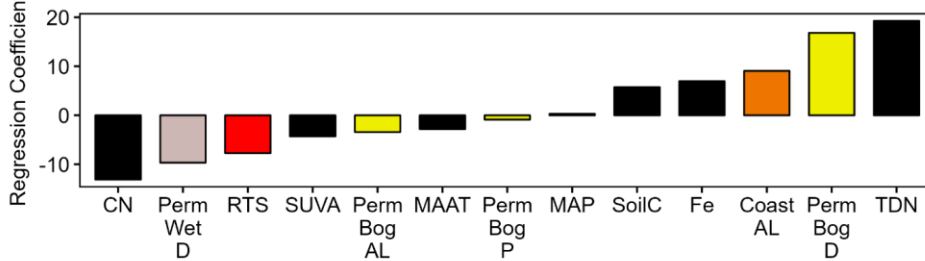
642 and mean annual precipitation (MAP). Additionally, it may be due to the high number of
 643 thermokarst affected sites found within these ecosystem classes, particularly retrogressive thaw
 644 slumps. There is a clear negative relationship between DOC concentrations and disturbed
 645 permafrost wetlands, retrogressive thaw slumps, and permafrost bogs.

646

(a)



(b)



647

648 Figure 5. Partial least squares regression (PLS) (a) loadings plot explaining 37% of the
 649 variability observed in DOC concentrations. PLS component axis 1 explains 28.8% of this

650 variability, whereas PLS component axis 2 explains 5.8%. The remaining axes explain the
651 variability in DOC are not shown for clarity. (b) Bar plot of PLS regression coefficients showing
652 the relative importance of each variable in predicting DOC concentrations. Regression
653 coefficients on y-axis are normalized so their absolute sum is 100, with positive and negative
654 values indicating the direction of the relationship. In the loadings plot squares depict ecosystem
655 classes and the blue triangle represents DOC concentrations. Black circles in the (a) loadings
656 plot and black bars in the (b) bar plot represent continuous environmental data that had at least
657 20% coverage of DOC data. All continuous data was log transformed, mean centered, and
658 standardized. Continuous data variables are represented by the colour black. CN =
659 carbon:nitrogen ratio. SUVA = the specific UV absorbance at 254 nm ($L\ mg\ C^{-1}\ m^{-1}$). MAP =
660 mean annual precipitation (mm). MAAT = mean annual temperature. SoilC = carbon content of
661 soil ($g\ C\ kg^{-1}$). TDN = total dissolved nitrogen ($mg\ L^{-1}$). Fe = dissolved iron ($mg\ L^{-1}$). PermWet.D
662 = disturbed permafrost wetland ecosystem class and is light pink (as in Figure 3) to represent
663 this ecosystem class. RTS = retrogressive thaw slump ecosystem class and is red (as in Figure
664 3) to represent this ecosystem class. Coast.AL = active layer of coastal tundra ecosystem class
665 and is orange (as in Figure 3) to represent this ecosystem class. PermBog.AL = active layer of
666 permafrost bog ecosystem class and is yellow (as in Figure 3) to represent this ecosystem
667 class. PermBog.P = permafrost lens of permafrost bog ecosystem class and is yellow (as in
668 Figure 3) to represent this ecosystem class. PermBog.D = disturbed permafrost bog ecosystem
669 class and is yellow (as in Figure 3) to represent this ecosystem class.

670 3.65 Response and mobilization of DOC and BDOC to thermokarst formation

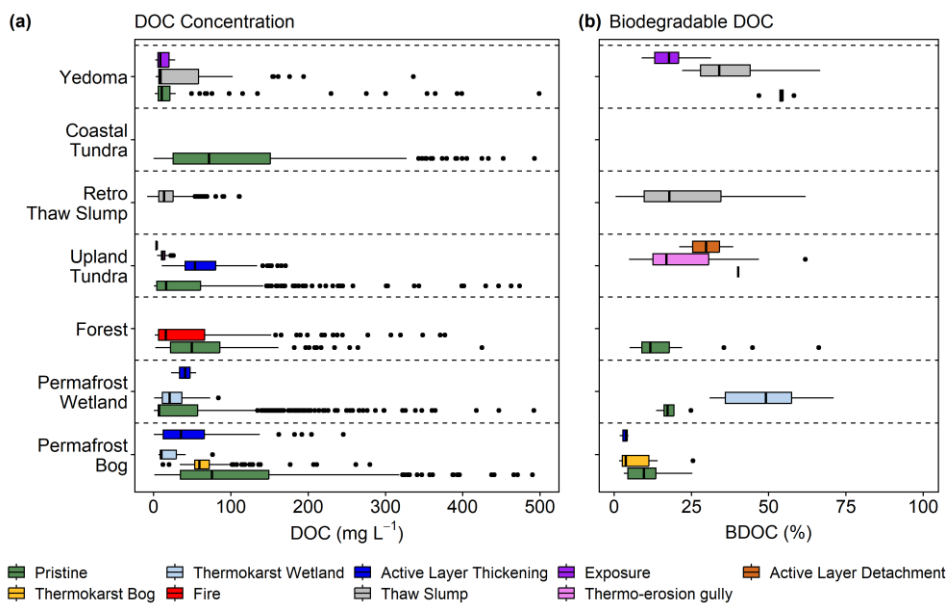
671 The highest DOC concentrations were found in pristine permafrost bog ($n = 442$; $75 \pm$
672 $112\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 37\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 149\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 442$) and coastal tundra ecosystems ($n = 427$;
673 $72 \pm 126\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 25\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 151\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 427$; Figure 6a). No thermokarst
674 affected coastal tundra ecosystems were recorded within the dataset. Whereas, in permafrost
675 bogs DOC concentrations were found to differ across different thermokarst disturbances
676 (ANOVA: $F_{(3, 720)} = 23.04$, $p < 0.001$), with the lowest found in thermokarst wetlands ($n = 16$;
677 $10 \pm 21\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 9\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 30\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 16$). DOC concentrations were also found
678 to differ between thermokarst affected and pristine sites in upland tundra ecosystems (ANOVA:
679 $F_{(3, 539)} = 5.91$, $p < 0.001$). The highest DOC concentrations in upland tundra ecosystems were
680 found in sites that had experienced active layer thickening ($n = 142$; $53 \pm 39\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 41\ mg$
681 L^{-1} ; $UQ = 80\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 142$), whereas the lowest were found in sites that had experienced
682 active layer detachment ($n = 6$; $4 \pm 2\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 3\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 5\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 6$). Pristine sites
683 had the highest DOC concentrations in both Yedoma ($n = 114$; $11 \pm 15\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 6\ mg\ L^{-1}$;
684 $UQ = 21\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 114$) and forest ($n = 189$; $49 \pm 64\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 22\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 86\ mg\ L^{-1}$;
685 $n = 189$) ecosystems. However, in permafrost wetland ecosystems pristine sites had the lowest
686 DOC concentrations ($n = 766$; $7 \pm 51\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $LQ = 6\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $UQ = 57\ mg\ L^{-1}$; $n = 766$) with

687 sites that were affected by both thermokarst wetland formation ($n = 17$; $21 \pm 26 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$; $LQ = 11$
688 mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 37 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$; $n = 17$) and active layer thickening ($n = 12$; $41 \pm 13 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$; $LQ = 34$
689 mg L^{-1} ; $UQ = 47 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$; $n = 12$) having higher DOC concentrations.

690 Our database contained limited data regarding BDOC ($n = 146$), thus BDOC results
691 across ecosystems should be interpreted with caution. Due to limited data we have combined
692 BDOC over all incubation lengths when assessing BDOC between pristine and thermokarst sites
693 (Figure 6). BDOC was found to differ between thermokarst disturbances within ecosystem types
694 in only Yedoma (ANOVA: $F_{(2, 27)} = 23.09$, $p < 0.001$) and permafrost wetland (ANOVA: $F_{(1, 10)}$
695 $= 15.87$, $p < 0.001$) ecosystems. The highest BDOC was found in both of these ecosystem types
696 also, with 54% ($n = 5$) in pristine Yedoma sites and 49% ($n = 8$) in thermokarst wetland affected
697 permafrost wetland sites (Figure 6b), with the latter exhibiting the highest BDOC across all
698 permafrost affected sites followed by thaw slumps (18%, $n = 11$) in Yedoma ecosystems and
699 active layer thickening (40%, $n = 1$) in upland tundra sites. The lowest median BDOC of 4%
700 were seen in thermokarst bogs ($n = 5$) and active layer thickening ($n = 3$) affected sites, with
701 pristine sites experiencing BDOC of 9% ($n = 15$). However, not all ecosystem types in the
702 database had BDOC data for both pristine and disturbance sites. For example, only pristine sites
703 data was available for forests, whereas there was no pristine site data available for upland tundra
704 sites. No BDOC data was available for coastal tundra sites.

705 All ecosystem types that had BDOC data, reported BDOC observed following 40 – 90
706 incubation days, and this also corresponded to the highest BDOC values for each ecosystem type
707 (Figure AFigure S4). When comparing the greatest BDOC observed within this incubation
708 length window, we found that values varied across ecosystem type (ANOVA: $F_{(5, 131)} = 14.6$, $p <$
709 0.001). The highest loss rates were observed in Yedoma and permafrost wetland ecosystems,
710 whereas the lowest we observed in organic rich forest and permafrost bog ecosystems (Figure
711 AFigure S4). Forest (ANOVA: $F_{(1, 16)} = 2.31$, $p = 0.15$) and permafrost bog (ANOVA: $F_{(3, 24)} =$
712 2.49 , $p = 0.09$) BDOC did not differ over incubation length, whereas Yedoma (ANOVA: $F_{(4, 25)}$
713 $= 24.92$, $p < 0.001$) and permafrost wetland (ANOVA: $F_{(1, 10)} = 15.87$, $p < 0.01$) did differ over
714 time, with their max occurring during this 40 – 90-day incubation length. This suggests that
715 when incubated for the same number of days, we would expect greater BDOC in Yedoma and
716 permafrost wetland ecosystems. Note, for this analysis BDOC values from all thermokarst and

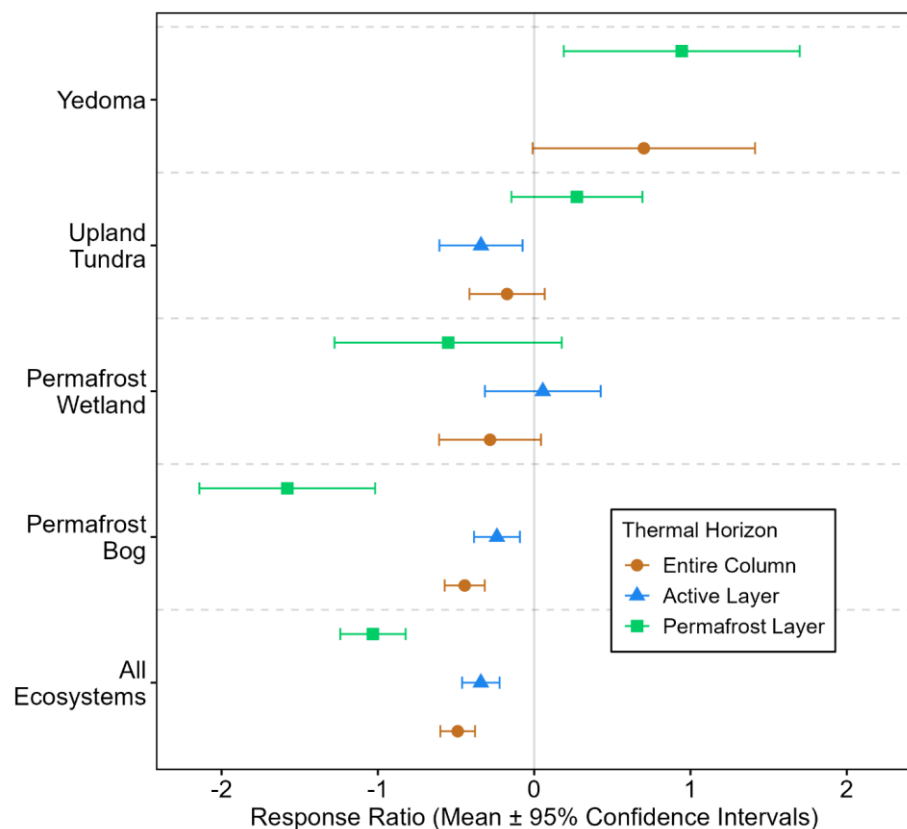
717 non-thermokarst affected sites within an ecosystem type were included. Given the limited BDOC
 718 data available we have compared BDOC across ecosystems in two ways. The first is using data
 719 from all measurement days to assess BDOC across pristine and disturbed ecosystems (Figure
 720 6b). The second is assessing max BDOC within each ecosystem type, which includes pristine
 721 and disturbed sites (Figure S4). Using both approaches we find that the highest BDOC is
 722 observed in high-latitude Yedoma and permafrost wetland sites.



724 Figure 6. DOC concentrations (mg L^{-1}) and biodegradable DOC (BDOC; %) from the top 3 m
 725 following disturbance including data from both field based and incubation studies. (a) DOC
 726 concentrations from each ecosystem type following disturbance where data was available. (b)
 727 Biodegradable DOC (BDOC) from each ecosystem type following disturbance where data was
 728 available. BDOC loss was determined following 3 – 304 days of incubation. Data from different
 729 incubation lengths was combined due to low sample size. Retro Thaw Slump = Retrogressive
 730 Thaw Slump. Boxes represents the interquartile range (25 – 75%), with median shown as black
 731 horizontal line. Whiskers extend to 1.5 times the interquartile range (distance between first and
 732 third quartile) in each direction, with outlier data plotted individually as black dots. Note colours
 733 associated with boxplots in this figure are only relevant for this figure.

734 Response ratios comparing the change in DOC concentrations between pristine and
735 thermokarst affected sites were calculated from our dataset from 108 studies using Eq. 1 (Figure
736 7). Only 17 studies provided data for both pristine and thermokarst affected ecosystems, with 87
737 papers providing DOC concentrations from pristine and 34 from thermokarst affected sites.
738 When considering all ecosystems together we found that response ratios were negative,
739 suggesting that DOC concentrations were higher in thermokarst affected sites compared to
740 pristine sites (Figure 7). These negative response ratios were most evident in permafrost bogs,
741 where they found throughout the entire column and individual thermal horizons. The greatest
742 increase in DOC concentrations following thermokarst was seen when comparing DOC
743 concentrations in the permafrost lens of permafrost bogs, and to a lesser extent permafrost
744 wetlands (Figure 7). Only in Yedoma ecosystems did we see positive response ratios throughout
745 the entire profile, suggesting a decrease in DOC concentrations following thermokarst formation
746 in Yedoma sites. This was also seen for DOC concentrations within the permafrost lens of
747 upland tundra sites, which include DOC concentrations from retrogressive thaw slumps and
748 thermo-erosion gullies in their thermokarst affected sites. The large confidence intervals for
749 some response ratios suggests high variability in the response of DOC concentrations to
750 thermokarst formation.

751



752

753 Figure 7. Response ratios of DOC concentrations from the top 3 m following thermokarst
 754 formation (calculated using Eq. 1). Response ratio means allow for relative comparison of
 755 changes in DOC following thermokarst formation between different ecosystem types. Negative
 756 values indicate lower DOC concentrations found in pristine ecosystems, whereas positive value
 757 indicates a decrease in DOC concentrations following thermokarst. Studies reporting DOC
 758 concentrations from Exposures, Retrogressive Thaw Slumps, and Thermo-Erosion Gullies from
 759 sites within the continuous permafrost zone were combined into the Upland Tundra ecosystem
 760 category. This did not include DOC concentrations from studies within the Yedoma permafrost
 761 domain (Strauss et al., 2021). Blue line represent DOC concentrations in the active layer, as per
 762 Figure 4. Green lines represent DOC concentrations in the permafrost lens, as per Figure 4.

763 Brown lines represent DOC concentrations from the entire column (i.e., both active layer and
764 permafrost lens).

765 **4. Discussion**

766 In this systematic review, we evaluated patterns of DOC concentrations in the top 3 m of
767 [soil in](#) terrestrial ecosystems across the northern circumpolar permafrost region based on results
768 from 111 studies and 2,845 DOC measurements. We focused on comparing concentrations of
769 DOC in soils across various geographical regions, ecological conditions, and disturbance types.
770 Our synthesis shows that median DOC concentrations across ecosystems range from 9 – 61 mg L⁻¹,
771 which represents similar albeit slightly higher DOC concentrations when compared to the
772 median DOC concentrations found in top soils of other land cover groups below 50°N (25 mg L⁻¹;
773 Langeveld et al., 2020), globally distributed lakes (6 mg L⁻¹; Sobek et al., 2007), and lakes
774 across the permafrost region (11 mg L⁻¹; Stolpmann et al., 2021). In general, we show that
775 organic soils have higher DOC concentrations than mineral soils, and that DOC concentrations
776 are positively related to total dissolved nitrogen concentrations and negatively to C:N ratios,
777 which corroborate previous findings of factors correlating with DOC concentrations (Aitkenhead
778 & McDowell, 2000; Lajtha et al., 2005). Overall, we found that properties associated with
779 ecosystem type are the main constraint on DOC concentrations. Furthermore, disturbance
780 through permafrost thaw has little impact on measured DOC concentrations, however this may
781 be due to the loss of biologically reactive DOC or the loss of an initially larger pulse of DOC
782 having been previously mobilised prior to the timing of sampling.

783 *4.1 Environmental factors influencing DOC*

784 Our database confirmed our first hypothesis that the highest DOC concentrations would be
785 found in organic rich soils. Previous synthesis efforts estimating global distributions of terrestrial
786 DOC concentrations have presented similar findings (Guo et al., 2020; Langeveld et al., 2020).
787 Both of these previous studies also show that some of the highest terrestrial DOC concentrations
788 are found within the northern circumpolar permafrost region, highlighting that these high DOC
789 concentrations found in organic rich permafrost soils are of global significance. Concentrations
790 of DOC in the top 3 m of soils closely mirrored stocks of SOC across the circumpolar permafrost
791 region (Hugelius et al., 2014). Organic rich Histosol and Histel soils contain the greatest SOC

792 per km², followed by Turbels and Orthels (Hugelius et al., 2014). The leaching of organic C from
793 soils act as a major source of DOC (Kalbitz et al., 2000; Marschner & Bredow, 2002), thus it is
794 not surprising that we find the highest as was seen in DOC concentrations in the across these
795 soil types with the greatest quantities of SOC (Figure 2a). While the highest DOC concentrations
796 are found within organic rich soils, the amount of C found as DOC represent a small amount of
797 the total SOC pool. Using the current best estimates of Histel SOC stocks (Hugelius et al., 2020),
798 the DOC pool represents <1% of the total C stock in permafrost-affected peatlands as has been
799 shown for both permafrost and global soils (Guo et al., 2020; Prokushkin et al., 2008).

800 4.2 Thermal horizons

801 In many ecosystems, DOC concentrations are greatest in the active layer nearer the
802 surface (Figure 4). This trend has also been observed in the vertical distribution of DOC across
803 global soils, with 50% of the DOC pool found in the top 0–30 cm (Guo et al., 2020). [The
804 production of DOC is associated with soil microbial activity (Guggenberger & Zech, 1993) and
805 plant inputs (Moore & Dalva, 2001), and the microbial production of DOC via input of labile
806 substrates has been shown to decrease with depth in permafrost (Hultman et al., 2015; Monteux
807 et al., 2018; Wild et al., 2016). Furthermore, the organic matter content decreases and mineral
808 content increases with depth, this depth trend and decrease in DOC with depth is particularly
809 evident between the active layer and permafrost lens in forest ecosystems (Figure 4a). While
810 permafrost and non-permafrost bogs do also see a shift in microbial community with depth
811 (Heffernan & Cavaco et al., 2022; Lamit et al., 2021), the movement of modern, surface derived
812 DOC down into deeper layers has also been observed (Chanton et al., 2008; Estop Aragonés et
813 al., 2018). These, combined with the large, frozen SOC stores found at depth (Hugelius et al.,
814 2020) and hydrological isolation (Quinton, Hayashi, & Chasmer, 2011), results in a DOC pool
815 that remains relatively similar across thermal horizons in permafrost bogs (Figure 4b).
816 Intriguingly, in both coastal tundra and permafrost wetland ecosystems, DOC concentrations
817 were found to be higher in the permafrost lens than in the active layer. This suggests that DOC
818 within the active layer of these ecosystems experienced some degree of mobilization, either via
819 export to the aquatic network or enhanced decomposition within soils. The higher DOC
820 concentrations found within the permafrost lens of these ecosystems may represent a vulnerable
821 DOC pool to enhanced mineralization following permafrost thaw (Figure 6).

Commented [LH3]: Incorporate this section into the section below and remove the 2nd hypothesis in intro

This section is not that interested but could be used to supplement the next

Eg forests are high only because of upper organics in active layer, whereas the rest are low because they are mineral rich

Permafrost bogs are high because they are high everywhere

Coast is high because of high frozen stores - potentially vulnerable!

Commented [LH4]: This should be in the intro

822 4.23 | Variation in DOC amongst across permafrost zones and ecoregions ecosystems |

823 Permafrost soils are estimated to store $1,035 \pm 150$ Pg C globally within the top 0–3 m
824 (Hugelius et al., 2014), with the highest storage of SOC found in the organic rich Histosols and
825 Histels. While persistent low temperatures are the main common factor which has led to the
826 accumulation of such high SOC amongst all permafrost soils, environmental factors associated
827 with the different ecosystem types are the main driving factors in differences amongst DOC
828 concentrations. The source of the permafrost DOC pool is from recent plant leachate inputs, or
829 from the decomposition and solubilization of SOC. Thus, the molecular composition of the DOC
830 pool is derived from a mixture of current and historical vegetation inputs. There are clear current
831 and historical shifts in dominant vegetation seen in the permafrost region from the south (boreal)
832 to north (arctic tundra), as well as across ecosystem types (upland forest, upland tundra, arctic
833 and boreal wetland). However, the majority of vegetation and its leachates found in the
834 permafrost region are generally found to produce relatively stable DOC (in terms of BDOC)
835 consisting of lignin-derived compounds, highly aromatic polyphenolic compounds, and low
836 molecular weight organic acids (Chen et al., 2018; Drake et al., 2015; Ewing et al., 2015; Selvam
837 et al., 2017). While differences in the stability of different DOC source-end members have been
838 shown (MacDonald et al., 2021), differences in redox conditions are likely a major driver in
839 differences in the accumulation and mineralization of DOC across permafrost ecosystem types
840 (Mohammed et al., 2022).

841 Similar to their globally significant stores of SOC (Hugelius et al., 2020), the accumulation
842 of high DOC concentrations found we show in peatlands, permafrost bogs, and permafrost
843 wetlands (Figure 3), is a result of the prevalence of cold and anoxic conditions throughout the
844 Holocene (Blodau, 2002). This leads to a reduction in microbial decomposition, and the
845 accumulation of both the large SOC (Hugelius et al., 2020) and DOC pool. Our results suggest
846 that the pristine permafrost bog and permafrost wetland DOC pool is relatively stable following
847 permafrost thaw (Figure 6, 7a). The lower DOC pool found in the active layer of permafrost
848 wetland (Figure 4a) may represent a potentially labile DOC pool (Figure 7a), but this is likely
849 due to fresh, plant derived inputs rather than the exposure and mineralization of previously
850 frozen organic matter (Figure 7a). Peatland vegetation, in particular *Sphagnum* mosses, produces
851 litter that has anti-microbial properties and is decay resistant (Hamard et al., 2019; Limpens,

Commented [LH5]: For this section combine the first two paragraphs. They don't contain a great deal of information other than waffle, maybe some could be used in the introduction instead

Rather, start with the claim that we find that the highest doc is found in areas where we find the highest soc. This follows latitudinal trend whereby the highest concentrations are found near the south in organic rich soils. Then go on to discuss this

Then have a paragraph just on coastal site, beef up the paragraph already there

The final paragraph could be removed too or incorporated to the previous (eg forests into latitudinal story and organic rich soils, or permafrost into that story)

Commented [LH6]: Condense this and send to the intro

852 Bohlin, & Nilsson, 2017), limiting the amount of SOC that is degraded and assimilated into the
853 DOC pool (Tfaily et al., 2013). This is further enhanced by the build-up of decomposition end
854 products and the thermodynamic constraint on decay observed in anoxic soils (Beer et al., 2008).
855 Permafrost has been continuously present in peatlands across the northern circumpolar
856 permafrost region for the past 6,000 years, with the greatest rates of permafrost formation
857 occurring within the past 3,000 years (Treat & Jones, 2018). Thus, a large proportion of the
858 organic matter found peatlands and wetlands in this region were present prior to permafrost
859 aggradation (i.e., permafrost formation), which indicates that permafrost formed epigenetically in
860 these areas. Permafrost aggradation impacts soil biogeochemical properties, leading to
861 potentially less decomposed organic matter with higher C/N ratios than non-permafrost
862 equivalent soils, particularly in permafrost wetlands (Treat et al., 2016). This can lead to the
863 build-up of high DOC concentrations that are vulnerable to potential mobilization following
864 thermokarst. Decomposition in epigenetic permafrost bogs following thermokarst has been
865 shown to be relatively slow (Heffernan et al., 2020; Manies et al., 2021), which further supports
866 our finding (Figure 6) that the large DOC pool found in these systems in relatively stable
867 following permafrost thaw. ~~The permafrost wetland DOC pool that accumulates following~~
868 ~~thermokarst may represent a potentially labile DOC pool (Figure 7a), but this is likely due to~~
869 ~~fresh, plant derived inputs rather than the exposure and mineralization of previously frozen~~
870 ~~organic matter (Figure 7a).~~

871 Coastal tundra ~~and forest~~ ecosystems had similarly high DOC concentrations to those found
872 in permafrost bogs (Figure 3a). Coastal tundra ~~and forest~~ ecosystems represented the highest
873 concentrations of DOC in mineral permafrost soils, ~~with the highest concentrations found in the~~
874 ~~permafrost lens (Figure 4a). Concentrations of coastal permafrost DOC were significantly lower~~
875 ~~in the active layer compared to within the permafrost lens (Figure 4a).~~ This is contrary to
876 findings that deeper coastal permafrost consists of low organic matter Pleistocene marine
877 sediments (Bristol et al., 2021) and the proximity of the active layer to vegetation inputs,
878 although this productivity and inputs are vulnerable to projected climatic warming and regional
879 “browning” and “greening” (Lara et al., 2018). Recent work has shown that DOC in the active
880 layer within the coastal permafrost is more biodegradable than OC in the permafrost lens
881 (Speetjens et al., 2022) and a substantial proportion of organic carbon derived from thawing

882 coastal permafrost is vulnerable to mineralization upon thawing, particularly when exposed to
883 sea water (George-Tanski et al., 2021). Export of terrestrial coastal permafrost DOC directly into
884 the Arctic Ocean can significantly influence marine biogeochemical cycles and food webs within
885 the Arctic ocean (Bruhn et al., 2021). Arctic coasts are eroding at rates of up to 25 m yr⁻¹ (Fritz,
886 Vonk, & Lantuit, 2017) and exporting large quantities of terrestrial organic matter export directly
887 to the ocean that is rapidly mineralized (Tanski et al., 2019). Enhanced DOC export from these
888 coastal tundra ecosystems may disrupt aquatic food webs through altering nutrient and light
889 supply, as has been shown for Swedish coastal systems (Peacock et al., 2022). These coastal
890 tundra sites represent a large DOC pool that is highly vulnerable to enhanced mobilization and
891 deserve further attention.

892 We found that DOC concentrations increased along a clear latitudinal gradient, from north to
893 south, in The-the remaining ecosystems characterised by mineral soils with an upper organic
894 layer, i.e., fForests, uUpland tTundra, and YedomaYedoma, -followed a clear latitudinal climate
895 gradient of increasing DOC concentrations from north to south. In forest ecosystems, the upper
896 organic layer, and the impact of soil temperature, moisture, and pH on SOC found there, strongly
897 influences the production, concentration, and composition of DOC (Neff & Hooper, 2002;
898 Wickland et al., 2007). Furthermore, the sorption of DOC to charcoal (Guggenberger et al.,
899 2008), and high lignin and phenolic input from vegetation (O'Donnell et al., 2016) produce a
900 difficult to degrade DOC pool, leading to the accumulation of the large DOC pool in the active
901 layer (Figure 4a) this ecosystem type. This trend with depth has also been observed in the
902 vertical distribution of DOC across global soils, with 50% of the DOC pool found in the top 0 –
903 30 cm (Guo et al., 2020). While not included in the most parsimonious PLS model (Figure 5),
904 Yedoma and uUpland tTundra ecosystems were found to negatively correlate with DOC
905 concentrations (Figure A-Figure S5). The greatest proportions of OC and nutrients used for DOC
906 production in these ecosystems are found in shallow organic layers (Semenchuk et al., 2015;
907 Wild et al., 2013) in these ecosystems. Beneath the upper organic horizons in these mineral soils
908 processes such as sorption of DOC to minerals and the formation of Fe-DOC or Al-DOC
909 complexes may remove DOC from the dissolved pool (Kawahigashi et al., 2006) and
910 mechanically protect it from mobilization (Gentsch et al., 2015). The majority of vegetation and
911 its leachates found in the permafrost region produce relatively stable DOC consisting of lignin-

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912 derived compounds, highly aromatic polyphenolic compounds, and low molecular weight
913 organic acids (Chen et al., 2018; Drake et al., 2015; Ewing et al., 2015; Selvam et al., 2017). In
914 forest ecosystems, large amounts of SOC have accumulated in surface organic layers through
915 increased vegetative inputs due to warmer and longer growing seasons. This organic layer depth,
916 and the impact of soil temperature, moisture, and pH on SOC found there, strongly influences the
917 production, concentration, and composition of DOC (Neff & Hooper, 2002; Wickland et al.,
918 2007). Furthermore, the sorption of DOC to charcoal (Guggenberger et al., 2008), and high
919 lignin and phenolic input from vegetation (O'Donnell et al., 2016) produce a difficult to degrade
920 DOC pool, leading to the accumulation of the large DOC pool in this ecosystem type. While
921 differences in the stability of different DOC source end-members have been shown (MacDonald
922 et al., 2021), differences in redox conditions are likely a major driver in differences in the
923 accumulation and mineralization of DOC across permafrost ecosystem types (Mohammed et al.,
924 2022).

Commented [LH8]: Condense this and send to the intro

Field Code Changed

Commented [LH9]: Make this fit better, but use it to round out this section stating that redox is probably the most important ecosystem factor influencing DOC (direct and indirect)

925 4.34 Vulnerability of DOC to enhanced mobilization following thermokarst

926 We define DOC mobilization as DOC lost from an ecosystem either via export or
927 degradation. Our second hypothesis that permafrost thaw would lead to enhanced mobilization of
928 DOC cannot be fully supported by the findings from this database. Using our chosen systematic
929 approach and focusing on data from terrestrial ecosystems, our database was limited to 3 studies
930 which represented <1% of the DOC concentration data. Several previous studies have detailed
931 the export of DOC in Arctic inland waters, see Table 2 in Ma et al., (2019). These studies were
932 excluded using our systematic approach (Table 1 and 2) as they do not directly measure DOC
933 export from a terrestrial ecosystem, rather they determine the quantity of terrestrial derived DOC
934 found in inland waters. This is a key distinction, as by not quantifying the export rates for
935 terrestrial ecosystems the net ecosystem carbon balance and vulnerability to enhanced export
936 may not be assessed, that have been excluded using this approach. We acknowledge the
937 limitation in our approach regarding the inclusion of DOC export data. Thus, this database
938 cannot be used to determine how permafrost thaw will influence DOC export from terrestrial
939 ecosystems within the northern circumpolar permafrost region. However, we identify this lack of
940 export data from terrestrial permafrost ecosystems as a key knowledge gap in our current
941 understanding of the permafrost carbon pool. Currently, Arctic rivers are estimated to export 25

942 – 36 Tg DOC year⁻¹ (Amon et al., 2012; Holmes et al., 2012), with this being dominated by
943 modern carbon sources (Estop-Aragonés et al., 2020), most likely derived from the top 1 m of
944 terrestrial ecosystems. Using current best estimates of the areal extent and soil organic carbon
945 stores in the top 1 m of Histosols, Histels, Orthels and Turbels (Hugelius et al., 2014), and if we
946 assume that the DOC pool represents ~1% of the SOC pool, we estimate that <1% of the current
947 DOC pool found in the top 1 m of Histosols, Histels, Orthels and Turbels is exported annually to
948 Arctic rivers. Quantifying the proportion of these DOC pools annually lost, and particularly the
949 proportions lost in headwater streams while being exported to Arctic rivers, is vital to assess the
950 importance of the mobilization of the terrestrial permafrost DOC pool.

951 Our calculated response ratios (Figure 7) for all ecosystems, indicating the difference in DOC
952 concentrations between pristine and permafrost thaw affected sites, partly supports our second
953 hypothesis that disturbance would lead to increased export and biodegradability of DOC. The
954 increase in DOC following thaw observed in permafrost bogs is likely due to increased inputs
955 due to increased runoff and shifts in vegetation following permafrost thaw (Burd, Estop-
956 Aragonés, Tank, & Olefeldt, 2020), [enhanced release of DOC \(Loiko et al., 2017\)](#), a relatively
957 stable soil organic carbon pool at depth due to several millennia of microbial processing (Manies
958 et al., 2021), the prevalence of anoxic conditions, and the potential hydrological isolation of
959 thermokarst bogs (Quinton, Hayashi, & Pietroniro, 2003). While not included in our analysis,
960 DOC found near the surface of the permafrost lens in forest ecosystems has been shown to be
961 more biodegradable than DOC found in the active layer (Wickland et al., 2018), and may
962 represent a decrease in DOC following thermokarst not captured here. Our findings of limited
963 mobilization of permafrost bog DOC upon thawing are supported by the findings that the ¹⁴C
964 signature of DOC in Arctic rivers is dominated by modern sources (Estop-Aragonés et al., 2020).
965 [However, individual studies have determined that thawing may release a large pool of permafrost](#)
966 [peatland DOC into aquatic networks \(Lim et al., 2021\)](#). ~~However, w~~We do see a reduction in
967 DOC concentrations in thermokarst affected sites at the higher latitude Yedomas, upland tundra,
968 and permafrost wetland ecosystems. This reduction in DOC concentrations in these ecosystems
969 may be due to the greater biodegradability and lability of the DOC found there (Figure 6b),
970 supporting our third hypothesis that the most biodegradable DOC would be found in higher
971 latitude ecosystems. Permafrost DOC in higher latitude ecosystems, particularly Yedomas

972 ecosystems, is characterised by syngenetic permafrost aggradation which have not undergone
973 centuries to millennia of soil formation and microbial processes, have been shown contain a
974 greater proportion of low oxygen, aliphatic compounds and labile substrates (Ewing et al.,
975 2015b; MacDonald et al., 2021). This leads to a greater biolability and rapid mineralization of
976 DOC (Vonk et al., 2015), potentially causing the reduction in DOC concentrations observed
977 following thaw. If this hypothesis is to be found true across all high latitude ecosystems with
978 further data, it further highlights the vulnerability of the large DOC pool found in coastal tundra
979 ecosystems.

980 In this study, we focus on the dissolved fraction of the OC pool, however the particulate
981 fraction should also be considered when discussing the mobilization of terrestrial OC in
982 permafrost landscapes. In boreal freshwater networks, particulate organic carbon (POC)
983 represents a small but highly labile fraction of terrestrially derived OC exported to the fluvial
984 network (Attemeyer et al., 2018). The degradation of permafrost derived POC is much slower
985 than that of POC in the boreal freshwater network and POC derived from younger sources along
986 the riverbank (Shakil, Tank, Kokelj, Vonk, & Zolkos, 2020). The DOC pool in Arctic
987 freshwaters is dominated by modern terrestrial sources (Estop-Aragonés et al., 2020), whereas
988 the POC pool has been shown to be dominated by older sources in both permafrost peatland
989 dominated areas (Wild et al., 2019), following the formation of retrogressive thaw slumps
990 (Keskitalo et al., 2021), and in thermokarst affected periglacial streams (Bröder et al., 2022).
991 This older POC has been shown to accumulate following export due to low lability and
992 degradation and mineral association, which suggests that upon thermokarst formation, previously
993 frozen OC exported in the particulate phase is not readily consumed by microbes and that
994 permafrost derived DOC is the more labile fraction of exported terrestrial OC.

995 *4.4.5 Future considerations for study design*

996 Determining the fate of mobilized terrestrial DOC in both permafrost thaw affected, and
997 pristine sites should be prioritized in future studies to constrain current estimates of the
998 permafrost C climate feedback. There are large spatial gaps in the database, particularly in areas
999 with large stock of permafrost C such as the Hudson Bay Lowlands and Mackenzie River Basin,
1000 both in Canada and two of the three largest deposits of permafrost peatland C in the circumpolar

1001 permafrost region (Olefeldt et al., 2021). Similarly, coastal tundra sites, which along with
1002 permafrost bog represent the ecosystems with the highest DOC concentrations, were sampled
1003 only along the northern shoreline of Alaska and the Yukon (USA and Canada, respectively;
1004 Table S1). From our analysis of this database, we determine that DOC mobilization is poorly
1005 understood for terrestrial permafrost ecosystems. To address this, the two main needs of future
1006 studies are 1) more direct estimates of DOC fluxes and export from terrestrial ecosystems into
1007 aquatic ecosystems, and 2) more DOC degradation (BDOC) and mineralization studies. Our
1008 results suggest that the high concentrations of DOC in permafrost bogs remains relatively stable
1009 upon thermokarst formation, although individual studies do indicate that thawing peat may
1010 provide a reactive source of DOC (Panneer Selvam et al., 2017). ~~Whereas the~~The database did
1011 not include any studies that reported on the mineralization of DOC from coastal tundra sites, thus
1012 we are unable to comment on the stability of the high DOC concentrations found in this
1013 ecosystem type. Further sampling and assessing the mineralization of DOC is required to
1014 characterize the potential pool of vulnerable DOC in areas with high DOC concentrations.
1015 Overall, our database and systematic approach only included 5 studies (Olefeldt & Roulet, 2012,
1016 2014; Olefeldt et al., 2012; Prokushkin et al., 2006; Prokushkin et al., 2005) that explicitly
1017 reported rates of DOC discharge, export, or fluxes from terrestrial ecosystems into the fluvial
1018 network. Given the importance of terrestrial DOC as a source for CO₂ production within the
1019 aquatic network (Weyhenmeyer et al., 2012), and the findings that previously frozen DOC is
1020 being exported to the freshwater network (Estop-Aragones et al., 2020), improved estimates of
1021 the quantity of terrestrial DOC being exported is essential to determine the potential aquatic
1022 greenhouse gas fluxes derived from the mineralization of terrigenous organic matter. To improve
1023 current estimates of the permafrost C feedback further studies are needed to determine how much
1024 DOC is laterally exported from terrestrial ecosystems, and the mineralization potential of this
1025 DOC along the terrestrial-freshwater-aquatic continuum.

1026 Lastly, we suggest that future studies should consider a standardization of methods and
1027 approached used to determine DOC concentrations for better comparison across studies. In
1028 constructing this database we identified three~~3~~ different filter sizes, eleven~~11~~ different extraction
1029 procedures, and four~~4~~ different measurement methods. The most common filter size used was
1030 0.45 µm and this has previously been described as the cut off to separate DOC from colloid

1031 materials (Thurman 1985; Bolan et al., 1999). In extracting DOC concentrations from soils the
1032 mostly commonly used approach (70% of all soil samples) was via soil leaching with no
1033 chemical treatment of the soils, although some added filtered water to promote leaching. From
1034 the seven approaches identified to extract water samples from terrestrial sites in determining
1035 DOC, 48% of samples were collected using a variety of suction devices and 46% done via grab
1036 samples. Of the four DOC measurements methods the most common approach was by
1037 combustion, with 90% of all DOC concentrations measured using this approach. As such, in
1038 order to continue measuring DOC concentrations in terrestrial permafrost ecosystems using the
1039 most consistent approach we suggest using 0.45 μm filters, extracting pore water via some type
1040 of sucking device or soils via leaching, and using a combustion based method to determine DOC
1041 concentrations

1042 **Data availability**

1043 All data will be made freely and publicly available on an online repository prior to publication

1044 **Author contributions**

1045 LH, DK, and LT designed and planned the systematic review approach; LH built the database.
1046 LH and DK analyzed the data; LH wrote the manuscript draft; DK and LT edited and reviewed
1047 the manuscript.

1048 **Competing interests**

1049 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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