



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**DRYING KINETICS AND STABILISATION OF SLUDGE IN  
SLUDGE LAGOON**

**ONG BEE YEN**

**FK 2001 52**

**DRYING KINETICS AND STABILISATION OF SLUDGE IN  
SLUDGE LAGOON**

**By  
ONG BEE YEN**

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Science in Faculty of Engineering  
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

**July 2001**



Dedicated To:

My dearest and beloved parents, brothers, sisters  
and Theng for their loving care  
and endless encouragement

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

## **DRYING KINETICS AND STABILISATION OF SLUDGE IN SLUDGE LAGOON**

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**July 2001**

**Chairman: Associate Professor Dr. Azni Bin Haji Idris**

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Sludge lagoon is a simple and cost effective method for sludge dewatering, especially in countries where land is available and relatively inexpensive, and the evaporation rate is higher than the precipitation rate. Immediate or short term solution is required to solve the problem of high sludge production rate in the country. Sludge lagoon holds privileges as various treatment processes can occur simultaneously in the lagoon, which include thickening, dewatering, storage and stabilisation. Two types of sludge lagoons with different initial sludge depth (0.750m and 0.375m) were investigated for the drying behaviour and drying efficiency. The first design is sludge lagoon with clay bottom where the dewatering mechanisms are decanting supernatant and evaporation. The second design is sludge lagoon installed with sand and underdrains system, where the dewatering mechanisms are filtration or draining and evaporation.

Septic tank sludge was used in this study and the experiment was carried out under transparent roof to avoid raining effects. Sludge drying kinetics models with high

fitness (as shown by regression factor,  $R^2$  higher than 0.90) had been developed to describe sludge drying behaviour. Drying of sludge in sludge lagoon with clay bottom can be best described by exponential function, whereas, drying of sludge in sludge lagoon with sand and underdrains system followed logarithmic function.

The results of the study show that sludge lagoon with sand and underdrains system and shallower sludge depth had highest drying efficiency. Decanting supernatant can remove most of the free water, whereas draining or filtration mechanism can remove all the free water and part of the interstitial (capillary) water. Highest sludge drying rate had contributed towards highest sludge compaction rate. As the drying process proceeded, total solids content and nitrate content were increased, whereas pH value and ammonium content were reduced.

The reduction in volatile solids was lower than 4 percent for all sludge lagoons during the study period. Sludge lagoon with highest drying efficiency was associated with highest reduction in fecal coliform density. Generally, concentrations of heavy metals detected in the final sludge were below the acceptable USEPA limits for land application of clean sludge except for lead. Final sludge contained high percentage of primary nutrient values where the possibility for beneficial reuse as soil conditioner should be investigated.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KINETIK PENGERINGAN DAN PENSTABILAN ENAPCEMAR DALAM  
KOLAM ENAPCEMAR**

Oleh

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Kolam enapcemar merupakan satu cara pengeringan enapcemar yang mudah dan kos-efektif, terutamanya di negara yang mempunyai tanah yang mudah diperolehi dan murah, serta kadar penyejatan melebihi kadar hujan. Penyelesaian secara serta merta atau jangka pendek amat diperlukan untuk menangani masalah kadar penghasilan enapcemar yang tinggi. Kolam enapcemar mempunyai kelebihan di mana pelbagai proses boleh berlaku serentak di dalam kolam, ini termasuk pemekatan, pengeringan, penyimpanan dan penstabilan. Dua jenis kolam enapcemar dengan kedalaman enapcemar yang berlainan (0.750m dan 0.375m) dikaji untuk memerhatikan tingkah laku dan keberkesanan pengeringan. Rekabentuk kolam enapcemar yang pertama ialah dengan tanah liat sebagai lapisan dasarnya, di mana mekanisme pengeringan adalah melalui penuangan cecair jernih di atas lapisan enapcemar dan penyejatan. Rekabentuk kolam enapcemar yang kedua ialah dengan lapisan pasir dan sistem saliran bawah, di mana mekanisme pengeringan adalah melalui penurasan atau pengaliran dan penyejatan

Enapcemar tangki septik digunakan dalam kajian ini dan kajian dilakukan di bawah bumbung lutsinar supaya kesan hujan dapat dielakkan. Model kinetik pengeringan enapcemar dengan ketepatan yang tinggi (ditunjuk oleh faktor regresi,  $R^2$  yang lebih daripada 0.90) telah diperolehi untuk menjelaskan tingkah laku pengeringan enapcemar. Pengeringan enapcemar dengan dasar tanah liat didapati paling tepat diterangkan dengan fungsi eksponen. Manakala, pengeringan enapcemar dengan dasar pasir dan sistem saliran bawah paling tepat diwakili dengan fungsi logaritma.

Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kolam enapcemar dengan dasar pasir dan saliran bawah, serta kedalaman yang cetek mempunyai keberkesanan pengeringan yang tinggi. Penuangan cecair jernih atas lapisan enapcemar berupaya membuang kebanyakan 'air bebas', manakala penurasan berupaya membuang kesemua 'air bebas' dan sebahagian daripada 'air kapilari'. Kadar pengeringan enapcemar yang tinggi menyumbang kepada kadar mampatan enapcemar yang tinggi. Apabila proses pengeringan berlanjutan, jumlah pepejal dan nitrat bertambah, manakala nilai pH dan ammonium berkurang.

Pengurangan dalam pepejal meruap didapati kurang daripada 4 peratus untuk semua kolam enapcemar dalam kajian ini. Kolam enapcemar dengan kadar keberkesanan pengeringan yang tinggi juga mencapai pengurangan ketumpatan fekal koliform yang tinggi. Secara umumnya, kandungan logam berat dalam enapcemar akhir adalah di bawah had USEPA untuk aplikasi tanah dengan enapcemar bersih kecuali logam plumbum. Enapcemar akhir masih mengandungi nutrien utama pada nilai yang tinggi di mana kemungkinan faedah guna semula sebagai penyubur tanah harus dikaji.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my most honorable and respectable supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Azni bin Haji Idris, for providing the invaluable guidance, generous advice, encouragement and also bearing with me throughout the whole course of my project. Thanks are also extended to my most respectable co-supervisors, Associate Professor Dr. Saari Mustapha and En. Ghani Liew Abdullah, for their constructive criticisms, enlightening suggestions and opinions.

Words cannot be describe my deepest appreciation for the contributions and sacrifices that my parents, brothers and sisters have had to go through to enable me to obtain the level of education that I have today.

I owe special thanks to all the lab assistants in Laboratory of Environmental Engineering, Civil Engineering and Soil Sciences for their kind assistants and cooperation.

Special thanks to my beloved Theng for his constant affection, caring, understanding and endless encouragement. Last but not least, my deepest gratitude to my housemate and coursemate especially Siew Yein, Maheran, Aida and Calvin, who make my years in UPM unforgettable one.



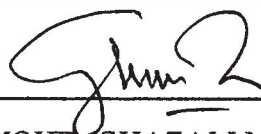
I certify that an Examination Committee met on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2001 to conduct the final examination of Ong Bee Yen on her Master of Science thesis entitled “Drying Kinetics and Stabilisation of Sludge in Sludge Lagoon” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



ONG BEE YEN

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL	viii
DECLARATION	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	xix
 <b>CHAPTER</b>	
1. INTRODUCTION	1.1
1.1 General	1.1
1.2 Scope of the Study	1.3
1.3 Significance of the Study	1.4
1.4 Objectives of the Study	1.5
 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	2.1
2.1 Definitions	2.1
2.2 Types of Sewage Sludge	2.2
2.3 Characteristics of Sewage Sludge	2.4
2.4 Issues Related to Sewage Sludge	2.5
2.5 Adverse Effects of Sewage Sludge	2.8
2.6 Sludge Treatment Processes	2.10
2.7 Water Distribution in Sludge	2.11
2.8 Sludge Dewatering	2.14
2.8.1 Sludge Dewatering Processes	2.15
2.8.2 Comparison of Final Solids Produced by Different Dewatering Techniques	2.17
2.8.3 Factors Influencing Dewaterability	2.18
2.8.4 Sludge Dewatering Mechanism and Drying Behaviour	2.19
2.8.5 Sludge Drying Kinetics	2.22
2.9 Lagooning Systems for Wastewater treatment	2.24
2.10 Sludge Lagoons as a Dewatering Method	2.26
2.10.1 Sludge Lagoon Operational Cycle	2.29
2.10.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Sludge Lagoon	2.30
2.10.3 Sludge Lagoon Design Considerations	2.31
2.11 Solid-Liquid Separation Processes Involved in Sludge Lagoon	2.35
2.11.1 Thickening/Sedimentation	2.36
2.11.2 Flow Mechanism Through Packed Bed	2.38
2.12 Sludge Stabilisation	2.40
2.13 Biodegradation Rate (Kinetics Of Biodegradation)	2.42
2.14 Inactivation of Pathogens	2.43
2.14.1 Inactivation Methods	2.43
2.14.2 Fecal Coliform Die-off Rate	2.45
2.15 Final Solids Disposal	2.46

3.	MATERIALS AND METHODS	3.1
3.1	Collection of Raw Materials	3.1
3.2	Characterisation of Raw Materials	3.2
3.2.1	Septic Tank Sludge	3.2
3.2.2	Sand and Clay	3.8
3.3	Experimental Design	3.9
3.4	Lab-Scale Study on Effectiveness of Sludge Lagoon (First Run)	3.12
3.4.1	Experimental Site	3.12
3.4.2	Description of the Sludge Lagoon	3.13
3.4.3	Sludge Filling Period	3.14
3.4.4	Sludge Drying Period	3.15
3.4.5	Sampling and Analysis	3.15
3.5	Lab-Scale Study on Effectiveness of Sludge Lagoon (Second Run)	3.21
3.5.1	Sludge Dewatering in Sludge Lagoons	3.22
3.5.2	Dewatering Experiments (Settling Test and Filtration Test)	3.25
4.	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	4.1
4.1	Characteristics of Sludge, Sand and Clay	4.1
4.1.1	Physical and Chemical Properties of Sludge	4.1
4.1.2	Water Distribution of Sludge	4.2
4.1.3	Specific Resistance to Filtration (SRF)	4.9
4.1.4	Sludge Volume Index (SVI)	4.10
4.1.5	Particle Size Distribution and Specific Gravity	4.11
4.1.6	Saturated Hydraulic Conductivity of Sand and Clay	4.12
4.2	Sludge Dewatering during Filling Period in Sludge Lagoon	4.13
4.2.1	Supernatant and Filtrate Generation	4.13
4.2.2	Percentage of Water Removed by Decanting Supernatant and Draining of Filtrate	4.17
4.3	Sludge Dewatering during Drying Period in Sludge Lagoon	4.20
4.3.1	Sludge Moisture Profile	4.20
4.3.2	Changes of Total Solids	4.26
4.3.3	Removal of Sludge Water	4.30
4.3.4	Sludge Drying Kinetics Models	4.34
4.3.5	Sludge Drying Rate	4.50
4.4	Variation of Sludge Level	4.52
4.5	Sludge Compaction Rate	4.55
4.6	Biodegradation and Stabilisation of Sludge	4.57
4.6.1	Changes of Volatile Solids	4.57
4.6.2	Changes of Organic Carbon	4.60
4.6.3	Variation of pH Value	4.61
4.6.4	Changes of Nitrogen Content	4.64
4.6.5	Changes of Total Phosphorus	4.70
4.6.6	Changes of Fecal Coliform	4.72
4.7	Changes of Heavy Metals	4.79
4.8	Nutrient Values	4.88
4.9	Quality of Final Solids	4.89
4.10	Dewatering Experiments	4.90
4.10.1	Settling Test	4.90
4.10.2	Filtration Test	4.93

5.	Conclusion and Recommendations	5.1
5.1	Conclusion	5.1
5.2	Recommendations	5.5
REFERENCES		R.1
APPENDICES		A.1
BIODATA		B.1

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
2.1	Typical Chemical Composition of Untreated and Digested Sludge	2.5
2.2	Contaminants in Sewage and Potential Impacts	2.9
2.3	Moisture Bonds	2.12
2.4	Final Solids Content by Several Dewatering Processes	2.17
2.5	Design Criteria for Lagoons	2.26
2.6	Sludge Lagoon Design Criteria	2.34
2.7	Pathogens and Their Effects on Human Health	2.44
2.8	Land Application Standards and Guidelines	2.47
3.1	Table 3.1: Scale Ratio for Full Scale and Lab Scale Sludge Lagoon with Sand and Underdrains System	3.11
3.2	Design, Sludge Depth and Sludge Loading Rate for Each Sludge Lagoon (First Run)	3.14
3.3	Parameters, Analytical Methods and Frequency of Sampling (First Run)	3.19
3.4	Description of Sludge Lagoon and Sludge Depth (Second Run)	3.22
3.5	Parameters and Frequency of Analysis (Second Run)	3.23
4.1	Physical and Chemical Properties of Sludge	4.1
4.2	Trendline Equation, $R^2$ and Differential Equation for Constant Rate Period and Falling Rate Period	4.5
4.3	Average Values of Critical Points	4.7
4.4	Percentage of Each Class of Particle Size, Median and Texture	4.11
4.5	Hydraulic Conductivity of Sand and Clay and Permeability Classes	4.12
4.6	Removal of Water by Decanting and Draining	4.18
4.7	Time Taken to Achieve 20, 25 and 30 Percent Total Solids	4.29
4.8	Percentage Removal of Sludge Water in Sludge Lagoon with Different Design Configuration (after Drying Period)	4.32
4.9	Drying Efficiency for Sludge Lagoon with Different Design and Initial Sludge Depth	4.33
4.10a	Drying Equations, $R^2$ and Drying Rate Equations (First Run)	4.37
4.10b	Drying Equations, $R^2$ and Drying Rate Equations for Validation	4.39
4.11	Prediction of Time Needed to Achieve 25 Percent Total Solids Using Drying Kinetics Models	4.40
4.12	Comparison of Constants in Drying Kinetics Models	4.42
4.13a	Sensitivity Analysis for Sludge Lagoons with 0.75m (First Run)	4.44
4.13b	Sensitivity Analysis for Sludge Lagoons with 0.75m (Second Run)	4.45
4.13c	Sensitivity Analysis for Sludge Lagoons with 0.37m (First Run)	4.46
4.14	Range of Initial Moisture content for Drying Kinetics Models	4.48
4.15a	Initial and Final Average Density of Fecal Coliform in First Run	4.73
4.15b	Initial and Final Average Density of Fecal Coliform in Second Run	4.78
4.16	Heavy Metals Content in Final Solids	4.79
4.17	Percentage of Nutrient Values in Final Sludge	4.88
4.18	Quality of Final Solids	4.89
4.19	Percentage of Supernatant Generated by Sludge	4.93
5.1	Sludge Drying Equations, $R^2$ and Constant Values	5.4
A.1	Cumulative Sludge Loading	A.1
A.2	Cumulative Supernatant/Filtrate Generation	A.2
A.3	Changes of Total Solids	A.5

A.4	Sludge Moisture Profile for C0.75 in Drying Period	A.6
A.5	Sludge Moisture Profile for C0.37 in Drying Period	A.7
A.6	Sludge Moisture Profile for S0.75 in Drying Period	A.8
A.7	Sludge Moisture Profile for S0.37 in Drying Period	A.9
A.8	Sludge Moisture Profile for C0.75* in Drying Period	A.10
A.9	Sludge Moisture Profile for S0.75* in Drying Period	A.11
A.10	Sludge Drying Rate in Drying Period	A.12
A.11	Variation of Sludge Level	A.13
A.12	Changes of Volatile Solids	A.17
A.13	Changes of Organic Carbon	A.18
A.14	Changes of pH Values	A.18
A.15	Changes of Total Nitrogen	A.19
A.16	Changes of Total Phosphorus	A.19
A.17	Changes of Ammonium	A.20
A.18	Changes of Nitrate	A.20
A.19	Changes of Cadmium	A.21
A.20	Changes of Copper	A.21
A.21	Changes of Nickel	A.21
A.22	Changes of Zinc	A.21
A.23	Changes of Chromium	A.22
A.24	Changes of Lead	A.22
A.25	Changes of Iron	A.22
A.26	Changes of Manganese	A.22
A.27	Changes of Potassium	A.23
A.28	Changes of Calcium	A.23
A.29	Changes of Magnesium	A.23
A.30	Changes of Fecal Coliform Density (Second Run)	A.24
B.1	Volume and Height of Sludge-Water Interface during Settling of Sludge at Different Total Solids Content	A.25
B.2	Cumulative Volume of Filtrate Collected in Filtration Test for Sludge at Different Total Solids Content	A.27



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	General Schematic for Sludge Treatment and Disposal Methods	2.11
2.2	Water Distribution in Sludge Particle	2.13
2.3	Drying Curve for Constant Drying Conditions	2.21
2.4	Drying Rate Versus Moisture Content	2.21
2.5	Plan View of Sludge Lagoons	2.28
2.6	Batch Settling Test	2.37
3.1	Experimental Setup for Drying Test	3.3
3.2	Design of Sludge Lagoon with Clay Bottom	3.10
3.3	Design of Sludge Lagoon with Sand Filter Media and Underdrains System	3.11
3.4	Experimental Site for Lab Scale Study of Sludge Dewatering	3.13
3.5	Schematic Diagram of Sludge Filling Operation and Dewatering Mechanism/Pathways during Filling Period and Drying Period for Both Types of Sludge Lagoons	3.16
3.6	Filtration Test	3.27
4.1	Changes of Moisture Content versus Time (Drying Curves)	4.2
4.2a	Changes of Moisture Content versus Time (Constant Rate)	4.4
4.2b	Changes of Moisture Content versus time (Falling Rate)	4.5
4.3a	Drying Rate versus Moisture Content (Drying Rate Curve)	4.6
4.3b	Water Distribution in Septic Tank Sludge	4.8
4.4	t/V versus V	4.9
4.5	Linear Range of t/V versus V	4.10
4.6	Particle Size Distribution Chart	4.11
4.7a	Supernatant/Filtrate Generation for Sand and Clay System with Sludge Depth of 0.375m	4.14
4.7b	Supernatant/Filtrate Generation for Sand and Clay System with Sludge Depth of 0.750m	4.14
4.8	Filtrate Generation in S0.75*	4.16
4.9a	Cumulative Sludge Loading and Supernatant/Filtrate Generation	4.18
4.9b	Cumulative Filtrate Generation for S0.75*	4.19
4.10a	Moisture Profile in C0.75 during Drying Period	4.21
4.10b	Moisture Profile in C0.37 during Drying Period	4.21
4.10c	Moisture Profile in S0.75 during Drying Period	4.22
4.10d	Moisture Profile in S0.37 during Drying Period	4.22
4.10e	Moisture Profile in C0.75* during Drying Period	4.25
4.10f	Moisture Profile in S0.75* during Drying Period	4.25
4.11a	The Changes of Total Solids versus Time (First Run)	4.27
4.11b	The Changes of Total Solids versus Time (Second Run)	4.28
4.12a	Changes of Moisture Content versus Time in Drying Period (First Run)	4.31
4.12b	Changes of Moisture Content versus Time during Drying Period (Second Run)	4.31
4.13a	Changes of Moisture Content in C0.75 during Drying Period	4.35
4.13b	Changes of Moisture Content in C0.37 during Drying Period	4.35
4.13c	Changes of Moisture Content in S0.75 during Drying Period	4.36
4.13d	Changes of Moisture Content in S0.37 during Drying Period	4.36
4.13e	Changes of Moisture Content in C0.75* during Drying Period	4.38

4.13f	Changes of Moisture Content in S0.75* during Drying Period	4.38
4.14a	Effect of Percentage Difference in Initial Moisture Content on the Time to achieve 25 Percent Total Solids for Sludge Lagoon with 0.75m (First Run)	4.47
4.14b	Effect of Percentage Difference in Initial Moisture Content on the Time to achieve 25 Percent Total Solids for Sludge Lagoon with 0.75m (Second Run)	4.47
4.14c	Effect of Percentage Difference in Initial Moisture Content on the Time to achieve 25 Percent Total Solids for Sludge Lagoon With 0.37m (First Run)	4.48
4.15a	Sludge Drying Rate versus Time (First Run)	4.50
4.15b	Sludge Drying Rate versus Time (Second Run)	4.52
4.16a	Variation of Sludge Level versus Time (First Run)	4.53
4.16b	Variation of Sludge Level versus Time (Second Run)	4.54
4.17a	Sludge Compaction Rate versus Time (First Run)	4.55
4.17b	Sludge Compaction Rate versus Time (Second Run)	4.56
4.18a	Changes of Volatile Solids versus Time (First Run)	4.58
4.18b	Changes of Volatile Solids versus Time (Second Run)	4.60
4.18c	Changes of Organic Carbon versus Time (Second Run)	4.61
4.19a	Changes of pH Value versus Time (First Run)	4.62
4.19b	Changes of pH Value versus Time (Second Run)	4.63
4.20a	Changes of Total Nitrogen versus Time (First Run)	4.64
4.20b	Changes of Ammonium versus Time (First Run)	4.65
4.20c	Changes of Nitrate versus Time (First Run)	4.65
4.20d	Changes of Total Nitrogen versus Time (Second Run)	4.68
4.20e	Changes of Ammonium versus Time (Second Run)	4.68
4.20f	Changes of Nitrate versus Time (Second Run)	4.69
4.21a	Changes of Total Phosphorus versus Time (First Run)	4.71
4.21b	Changes of Total Phosphorus versus Time (Second Run)	4.72
4.22a	Changes of Fecal-Coliform Density by Levels in C0.75* (Second Run)	4.74
4.22b	Changes of Fecal-Coliform Density by Levels in S0.75* (Second Run)	4.76
4.22c	Changes of Average Fecal-Coliform Density (Second Run)	4.77
4.23a	Changes of Cadmium versus Time (First Run)	4.80
4.23b	Changes of Cadmium versus Time (Second Run)	4.80
4.24a	Changes of Copper versus Time (First Run)	4.81
4.24b	Changes of Copper versus Time (Second Run)	4.81
4.25a	Changes of Nickel versus Time (First Run)	4.82
4.25b	Changes of Nickel versus Time (Second Run)	4.82
4.26a	Changes of Zinc versus Time (First Run)	4.83
4.26b	Changes of Zinc versus Time (Second Run)	4.83
4.27a	Changes of Chromium versus Time (First Run)	4.84
4.27b	Changes of Chromium versus Time (Second Run)	4.84
4.28a	Changes of Lead versus Time (First Run)	4.85
4.28b	Changes of Lead versus Time (Second Time)	4.85
4.29a	Changes of Iron versus Time (First Run)	4.86
4.29b	Changes of Iron versus Time (Second Run)	4.86
4.30a	Changes of Manganese versus Time (First Run)	4.87
4.30b	Changes of Manganese versus Time (Second Run)	4.87

4.31	Settling Characteristics for Sludge at Different Total Solids Content	4.90
4.32	Percentage of Supernatant Generated by Sludge at Different Total Solids Content	4.92
4.33	Cumulative Filtrate Volume versus Time for Sludge at Different Total Solids Content	4.94
4.34	Percentage of Filtrate Generated from Sludge with Different Total Solids Content	4.95

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C0.75	Sludge lagoon with clay bottom and sludge depth of 0.750m (first run)
C0.37	Sludge lagoon with clay bottom and sludge depth of 0.375m (first run)
S0.75	Sludge lagoon with sand and underdrains system and sludge depth of 0.750m (first run)
S0.37	Sludge lagoon with sand and underdrains system and sludge depth of 0.375m (first run)
C0.75*	Sludge lagoon with clay bottom and sludge depth of 0.750m (second run)
S0.75*	Sludge lagoon with sand and underdrains system and sludge depth of 0.750m (second run)

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

Sewage includes human waste, urine and wastewater from kitchen, bathrooms and laundries are generated daily by human activities. Untreated sewage may pollute the river and carry infectious pathogenic organisms into river, causes spread of diseases like cholera, typhoid and hepatitis A (Indah Water Konsortium Sdn. Bhd., 2000). To safeguard the public health and ensure cleanliness of the country, sewage must be treated and disposed of in a safe manner.

Sewerage system plays the roles to collect, transfer, treat and dispose of human waste and wastewater in the country. In certain countries the sewerage systems are designed to treat commercial and industrial wastewater including sewage, however Malaysia's sewerage system treats only human waste and household wastewater (Indah Water Konsortium Sdn. Bhd., 2000).

All the wastewater treatment system from individual septic tanks to the most sophisticated mechanical plants produce sludge. Sewage sludge is the solid removed from wastewater originates from households and industrial activity during sewage treatment (Try and Price, 1995). It is mainly comprised of water (97 percent) and trace amount of suspended and dissolved organic and inorganic solids. The primary nuisance of sewage sludge to the public health and environment were identified as odour, heavy metal and pathogen. Therefore, sewage sludge treatments will always

include the reduction of organic matter, heavy metal, pathogenic organism and odour problem (Bruce et al., 1984).

According to Indah Water Konsortium Sdn. Bhd. (2000), Malaysia produces approximately 5 million cubic meters of domestic sludge annually and this figure is expected to rise to 7 million cubic meters per year by the year 2022. Immediate solution to sludge problem is to use existing sewage treatment plants with excess capacity to treat septic tank sludge. Another short terms (2 to 5 years) solution is to construct sludge lagoons, which will serve as sludge holding and treatment facilities (dewatering and stabilisation). However, sludge digestion and mechanical dewatering facilities are needed for long term use in urban areas.

One of the main objectives of sludge treatment is to reduce the water content. The advantages of dewatering are two folds. First, it reduces the sludge volume, which subsequently cut down the handling and transportation cost and, secondly it can improve the physical properties of the sludge making it easier to handle (Lester, 1990).

There are various methods to dewater sludges, which range from conventional air drying of sludge on open air drying beds to mechanical systems such as filter presses and centrifuges (Outwater, 1994). The selection of a treatment method considering not only the achievable effluent or final solids qualities, it also involves economic factor. Sludge lagoon is relatively cheap and easy to construct compare to mechanical dewatering facilities. According to Outwater (1994), sludge lagoon is a simple and cost effective method of dewatering sludge if the climate is hot and dry,

land is available and inexpensive, and there are no neighbours or odour insensitive neighbours nearby.

Sludge lagoon is similar in concept to a deep sand drying bed with restricted drainage. Lagoons are generally built by enclosure of a land area with dikes or berms, or by excavation, with no attempt to maximise drainage with the underdrains or by a sand layer. However, it is usually desirable for lagoons to have good drainage (Williams and Culp, 1986). Sludge lagooning offers some privileges compare to conventional sand drying bed as it allows stabilisation or biodegradation process to take place in addition to thickening and dewatering processes (Indah Water Operations Sdn. Bhd., 1997).

This study focuses on determining design parameters involving sludge lagoon that is intended for drying and dewatering of stable sewage sludge.

## **1.2 Scope of the Study**

This study explored the physical and biological treatment processes occurred in simulated sludge lagoons. The raw material used in this study was sludge from septic tank. The physical processes studied include dewatering by decanting supernatant and draining of filtrate, drying by evaporation and compaction of sludge. Whereas the biological processes studied include the biodegradation of sludge and changes of fecal-coliform density during storage, digestion and drying of sludge. As most of the previous studies on sludge lagoon focus on sludge dewatering and drying aspect, hence the biodegradation and stabilisation of sludge likely to occur in sludge lagoon is not well-understood especially in hot tropical climate like Malaysia.

The changes of organic matters, nitrogen content, phosphorus, pH, and heavy metals were monitored to give an illustration of the processes occur in sludge lagoons. Biodegradations of organic matter were studied by using volatile solids as indicator.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Sludge lagoon is a quite old method used for handling of wastewater treatment plant sludge. Countries with hot and arid climates, which receive evaporation rates higher than precipitation rates especially favour sludge dewatering using sludge lagoon. In Malaysia, conventional sand drying bed is most commonly employed for sludge dewatering. However, recently the concept of sludge lagoon is re-introduced to seek for the opportunity for further digestion or stabilisation to take part in the lagoon and simultaneously dewater and holding the large volume of sludge generated in the country. It is also believed that sludge lagoon with clay lining at the bottom can prevent groundwater contamination compare to conventional sand drying bed.

Since sludge lagoon has significant importance in solving sludge problem for the country. Hence, it is of great interest to know the feasibility and performance of sludge lagoon under Malaysia condition, before full-scale lagoon can be constructed and put into operation. Most of the recent studies on sludge dewatering available in literature reviews focus on mechanical dewatering system and the dewatering data on sludge lagoon are insufficient. Data on biodegradation of sludge, changes of fecal coliform density, nutrient and heavy metals in sludge lagoon are even unknown. Therefore, this study was carried out to generate all these raw data for understanding the processes occur in sludge lagoon and the achievable quality of dried sludge for land application or other uses. The data can also provide information for operator



and decision maker for the operation and design or modification of the sludge lagoon under Malaysia conditions.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

Generally, this study aims to investigate the sludge dewatering, drying and stabilisation processes involve in lab-scale simulated sludge lagoons and to know the feasibility of dewatering and treatment of sludge using sludge lagoon under Malaysia condition. More specifically, objectives of this study can be summarised as follows:

1. To analyse the dewatering characteristics of sewage sludge.
2. To study sludge dewatering and drying kinetics in sludge lagoon with different design configurations (system with clay lining and system with sand filter media/underdrains) and different sludge depths (0.750m and 0.375m).
3. To investigate the degree of biodegradation and stabilisation of sludge in sludge lagoon, in the aspects of reduction of volatile solids and fecal-coliform density.
4. To determine the quality of final solid from sludge lagoon in terms of nutrient values, heavy metals and fecal-coliform density.