



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**MICRO-ALGAE REMOVAL IN DOMESTIC WASTEWATER USING
ASPERGILLUS FLAVUS SOFT PELLETS AS A BIO-COAGULANT**

AHMAD HUSSEIN RAJAB

FK 2007 53



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ASPERGILLUS FLAVUS SOFT PELLETS AS A BIO-COAGULANT**

By

AHMAD HUSSEIN RAJAB

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

May 2007



DEDICATION

I am happy to dedicate this work to my country “Iraq”. A country is great by the character of its people and not by its number. I adore my country because it is the land of civilizations from the time immemorial.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who have been supportive of my endeavor towards my M.Sc. study.

The support of my family has been encouraging me to pursue my M.Sc study. Without their support I could not have achieved thus far. To my father, mother, brothers and my friends I thank them for their supporting me for so many years. I wish to make both of them proud. You have been a constant source of strength throughout my M.Sc study whenever I need.



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

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Chairman: Professor Azni Idris, PhD

Faculty : Engineering

Nuisance due to algae problems will become more widespread and severe as our growing urban populations and industries continue to discharge their wastes into streams. Some of the problems are odour and taste, the clogging of filters, growths in pipes, cooling towers and on reservoir walls, surface water mats or blooms and toxicity. The existing chemical and physical methods used for micro-algae removal are creating undesirable effects in the water, therefore, most of the recent researches are focusing on biological removal methods due to lesser of impact on the environment and water quality and it may be a more economical alternative to some chemical and physical methods.

This study used *A. flavus* as bio-coagulant for micro-algae removal in domestic wastewater. Jar test is used to determine the proper *A. flavus* dosage and retention time. It was determined that 5% (v/v) of *A. flavus* as optimum concentration and 12 hours as optimum retention time. At the optimum *A. flavus* concentration and



retention time removal efficiencies were recorded as: 72.3% of micro-algae cell number, 79.5% of TSS, 78.6% of VSS, 63.5% of COD, 60% of BOD, 73.5% of nitrate, 45.1% of phosphorus, 90.6% of color, 76.1% of turbidity and pH was decreased from (7.45 – 6.9) to (7.0 – 6.5).

1.2 mm of *A. flavus* soft pellets size shown a high removal in comparison with 2.5mm and 4.3mm. with 1.2mm of *A. flavus* soft pellets size used, 71.5% of micro-algae removal, 77.9% of TSS removal, 76.1% of VSS removal, 68.6% of COD removal and 82.6% of color removal at 12 hours of retention time are recorded.

The experimental results indicated that the solid capturing ability of *A. flavus* increased as the free surface area of *A. flavus* soft pellets increased. Moreover, *A. flavus* soft pellets capturing ability increased as retention time increased.

The zeta potential result revealed that the average zeta potential of micro-algae was – 23.7 milivolt which the average zeta potential of *A. flavus* was + 46.1 milivolt. The charge difference between *A. flavus* and micro-algae may have constituted to the *A. flavus* ability to capture micro-algae.

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

**PENGANSINGAN MIKRO-ALGA DI DALAM AIR SISA DOMESTIK
DENGAN MENGGUNAKAN PELET LEMBUT *ASPERGILLUS FLAVUS*
SEBAGAI BIO-KOAGULAN**

Oleh

AHMAD HUSSEIN RAJAB

Mei 2007

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Fakulti : Kejuruteraan

Pelbagai masalah yang diakibatkan oleh alga akan menjadi semakin meruncing dengan bertambahnya bilangan penduduk dan industri yang berterusan membuang sisa ke dalam sistem saliran. Di antara masalah yang timbul ialah rasa dan bau, sumbatan pada penapis, pertumbuhan dalam sistem perpaipan, menara penyejuk dan pada dinding reservoir, fenomena hamparan pada air permukaan, infestasi di dalam air siap dan ketoksidan. Kaedah kimia dan fizikal yang digunakan untuk mengawal mikro-alga boleh mengakibatkan kesan-kesan yang tidak diingini terhadap air. Oleh sebab itu, kebanyakan kajian terkini menumpukan kepada kaedah rawatan secara biologi supaya kesan buruk terhadap alam sekitar dan kualiti air dapat dikurangkan, selain dari menyediakan kaedah yang lebih ekonomik berbanding sebahagian kaedah kimia dan fizikal.

Dalam kajian ini, *A. flavus* digunakan sebagai bio-koagulan untuk mengawal mikro-alga di dalam air sisa domestik. Ujian balang digunakan untuk menentukan dos yang



sesuai bagi *A.Flavus*. Di dapati bahawa kepekatan optimum *A. Flavus* ialah pada 5 % (v/v) manakala masa tahanan yang optimun ialah 12 jam. Pada kepekatan *A. flavus* dan tempoh tahanan optimum, kadar penyingkiran yang efisien telah direkodkan dimana 72.3 % jumlah bilangan sel mikro-alga berjaya disingkirkan, TSS sebanyak 78.6 %, COD sebanyak 63.5%, BOD sebanyak 60 %, nitrat sebanyak 73.5%, fosforus sebanyak 45.1 %, warna sebanyak 90.6 %, kekeruhan sebanyak 76.1 % dan bacaan pH meningkat daripada (7.45 – 6.9) kepada (7.0 – 6.5).

Palet lembut *A. Flavus* yang bersaiz 1.2 mm menunjukkan kadar penyingkiran yang lebih tinggi berbanding palet lembut bersaiz 2.5 mm dan 4.3 mm. Palet lembut *A. Flavus* bersaiz 1.2 mm telah merekodkan sebanyak 71.5 % penyingkiran mikro-alga, penyingkiran TSS sebanyak 77.9%, penyingkiran VSS sebanyak 76.1%, penyingkiran COD sebanyak 82.65 dan penyingkiran warna sebanyak 82.6% pada 12 jam masa tahanan.

Keputusan eksperimen menunjukkan kebolehan palet lembut *A. Flavus* memerangkap pepejal bertambah apabila permukaan bebas *A. Flavus* meningkat. Selain itu, kebolehan palet lembut *A. Flavus* juga meningkat apabila masa tahanan meningkat.

Selain itu, bagi spesis mikro-alga yang terlibat spesis mikro-alga yang tidak boleh bergerak adalah lebih mudah diperangkap berbanding spesis mikro-alga yang boleh bergerak. Kebolehan memerangkap pepejal bagi *A. flavus* juga meningkat dengan meningkatnya masa tahanan.

Keputusan ujian potensi zeta menunjukkan purata bagi mikro-alga adalah $- 23.7$ milivolt dan bahawa potensi zeta purata bagi *A. flavus* adalah $+ 46.1$ milivolt. Di sebabkan kehadiran cas yang berlainan di antara *A. flavus* dan mikro-alga tersebut *A. flavus* boleh memerangkap mikro-alga dan memendapkannya.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on / / 2007 to conduct the final examination of Ahmad Hussein Rajab on his Master of Science thesis entitled “Micro-algae Removal in Domestic wastewater By Using *Aspergillus flavus* Soft Pellets As Bio-coagulant” 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 quotation 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.

AHMAD HUSSEIN RAJAB

Date: 02/Aug/2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL	viii
DECLARATION	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Problem Statement	2
1.2 Research Objectives	3
1.3 Importance and Significance of the Study	4
1.4 Scope of Research	4
1.5 Thesis Layout	5
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Introduction to Algae	6
2.2 Algae polluted water	6
2.3 Water pollution relating to Algae	7
2.3.1 Municipal water treatment	7
2.3.2 Irrigation waters	9
2.3.3 Golf course water	9
2.3.4 Swimming pools	9
2.3.5 Lake fronts	10
2.3.6 Fish ponds	10
2.4 Toxic algae	11
2.4.1 Humans	12
2.4.2 Wildlife	12
2.4.3 Livestock	12
2.5 Algae removal methods	13
2.5.1 Physical methods	14
2.5.2 Chemical methods	17
2.5.3 Biological methods	23
2.6 <i>Aspergillus</i>	26
2.7 <i>Aspergillus flavus</i>	27
3 MATERIALS AND METHODS	29
3.1 Experimental design	29
3.2 Wastewater collection	30
3.3 Microorganism (<i>Aspergillus flavus</i>)	30



3.4	Spore Suspension inoculum preparation	30
3.5	Soft Pellets Preparation	31
3.6	Experimental Runs	31
3.6.1	Determine the optimum dosages and retention time	31
3.6.2	Investigation on the soft pellets size effectiveness	32
3.7	Analytical Methods	33
3.7.1	Micro-algae cells count	33
3.7.2	Total Suspended Solid (TSS)	35
3.7.3	Volatile Suspended Solid (VSS)	36
3.7.4	Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)	37
3.7.5	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)	38
3.7.6	Nitrogen-Nitrate (NO_3^- N)	39
3.7.7	Phosphorus (PO_4^{3-})	40
3.7.8	Color	41
3.7.9	Turbidity	42
3.7.10	pH	42
3.7.11	Statistical analyses	43
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	44
4.1	Zeta potential for <i>Aspergillus flavus</i> and wastewater	44
4.2	Soft pellets formation	49
4.3	Capturing ability of 1% <i>A. flavus</i> at 1 hour retention time	52
4.4	Capturing ability 1%, 3% and 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6 hours retention time	55
4.4.1	Micro-algae cells number count	59
4.4.2	Total Suspended Solid (TSS)	61
4.4.3	Volatile Suspended Solid (VSS)	62
4.4.4	Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)	63
4.4.5	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)	64
4.4.6	Nitrogen-nitrate (NO_3^- N)	65
4.4.7	Phosphorus (PO_4^{3-})	66
4.4.8	Color	67
4.4.9	Turbidity	68
4.4.10	pH values	69
4.5	Capturing ability of <i>A. flavus</i> 5% v/v at different retention time	71
4.5.1	Micro-algae cells number count	79
4.5.2	Total Suspended Solid (TSS)	80
4.5.3	Volatile Suspended Solid (VSS)	82
4.5.4	Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)	82
4.5.5	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)	83
4.5.6	Nitrogen-nitrate (NO_3^- N)	84
4.5.7	Phosphorus (PO_4^{3-})	86
4.5.8	Color	86
4.5.9	Turbidity	88
4.5.10	pH values	89

4.6	The effectiveness of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets sizes on micro-algae removal	90
4.6.1	Micro-algae cells number count	102
4.6.2	Total Suspended Solid (TSS)	104
4.6.3	Volatile Suspended Solid (VSS)	106
4.6.4	Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)	107
4.6.5	Color	109
4.7	Cost of treatment	111
4.8	A comparison of bio-coagulation method and other chemical and physical method	112
5	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	113
5.1	Conclusion	113
5.2	Recommendations	115
	REFERENCES	117
	APPENDICES	122
	BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR	176

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
4.1	Zeta potential values for <i>A. flavus</i> , wastewater samples and tap water.	45
4.2	<i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets diameters size (mm)	50
4.3	Removal efficiency of <i>A. flavus</i> for selected parameters at 1 hour detention time	53
4.4	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 1% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6 hours of retention time.	56
4.5	Table 4.5: Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 3% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6 hours of retention time	57
4.6	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6 hours of retention time.	58
4.7	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 1 hour retention time	72
4.8	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 3 hours retention time	73
4.9	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6 hours retention time	74
4.10	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 9 hours retention time	75
4.11	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 12 hours retention time	76
4.12	Removal efficiency of selected parameters by using 5% of <i>A. flavus</i> at 24 hours retention time	77
4.13	pH values of samples treated by using 5% (v/v) of <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times.	89
4.14	1.2 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at first hour of retention time	90
4.15	1.2 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at third hour of retention time	91

4.16	1.2 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at sixth hour of retention time	92
4.17	1.2 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at twelfth hour of retention time	93
4.18	2.5 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at first hour of retention time	94
4.19	2.5 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at third hour of retention time	95
4.20	2.5 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at sixth hour of retention time	96
4.21	2.5 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at twelfth hour of retention time	97
4.22	4.3 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at first hour of retention time	98
4.23	4.3 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at third hour of retention time	99
4.24	4.3 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at sixth hour of retention time	100
4.25	4.3 mm diameter of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets used to treat wastewater at twelfth hour of retention time	101
4.26	A comparison of biological, chemical and physical methods on micro-algae removal	112
5.1	A comparison of results of this study and Effluent discharge standards for inland water	115
5.2	A comparison between result of this study and Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) (EPA 816-F-02-013 July 2002).	116

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	Algal harmful bloom (Brown tide) in the fish pond (UPM)	11
2.2	Schematic illustration of the Jameson flotation cell (Yan and Jameson)	16
2.3	<i>Aspergillus flavus</i>	28
3.1	Overall experimental design	29
3.2	Hemocytometer direct microscopic counting is a quick way of estimating microbial cell number (Miller and Levine, 1991)	34
4.1	Concept in bio-coagulation	45
4.2	<i>Apergillus flavus</i> mycelium: (a) <i>Apergillus flavus</i> soft pellets, (b) <i>Apergillus flavus</i> mycelium.	46
4.3	<i>A. flavus</i> mycelium captured micro-algae cells and small-suspended matter.	47
4.4	Different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets	50
4.5	Different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets formatted by using 67.125×10^6 spores/mL of <i>A. flavus</i> with different concentration of inoculums.	51
4.6	The difference between control sample and sample treated by 1% <i>A. flavus</i> at 1 hour retention time.	52
4.7	The differences between control sample and samples treated by using different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	59
4.8	Micro-algae removal efficiency with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	60
4.9	TSS and VSS removal efficiency with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	62

4.10	COD and BOD removal efficiency with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	64
4.11	Nitrate and Phosphorus Removal Efficiency with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	66
4.12	Color and Turbidity removal efficiency with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time.	68
4.13	pH value of samples treated with different concentrations of <i>A. flavus</i> at 6-hour retention time	70
4.14	The difference between control sample and samples treated by using 5% (v/v) of <i>A. flavus</i> at different retention time, (a) 6 hours, (b) 12 hours and (c) 24 hours.	78
4.15	Micro-algae removal efficiency by 5% v/v of <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times.	80
4.16	TSS and VSS removal by using 5% v/v <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times.	81
4.17	COD and BOD removal efficiency by using 5% v/v of <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times.	83
4.18	Nitrate and phosphorus removal efficiency by using 5% v/v of <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times	85
4.19	Color and Turbidity removal efficiency by using 5% v/v of <i>A. flavus</i> with different retention times.	88
4.20	The differences between the control sample and samples treated by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets 5% v/v at first hour of retention time.	102
4.21	Micro-algae removal by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets with different retention times.	104
4.22	TSS removal by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets with different retention times.	105
4.23	VSS removal by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets with different retention times.	107
4.24	COD removal by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets with different retention times.	108
4.25	Color removal by using different sizes of <i>A. flavus</i> soft pellets with different retention times.	110

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CO ₂	carbon dioxide
U.S. EPA	United States. Environmental Protection Agency
NO ₃ ⁻	Nitrate
N	Nitrogen
P	Phosphorous
UV	Ultraviolet
US	Ultrasound
O ₃	Ozone
TPP	Toxin Producing Plankton
A/A/O	Anaerobic/Anoxic/Oxic
COD	Chemical Oxygen Demand
NH ₄ -N	Ammonia-Nitrogen
IWK	Indah Water Konsortium
PDA	Potato Dextrose Agar
WF	Wheat Flour
v/v	Volume/Volume
TSS	Total Suspended Solid
VSS	Volatile Suspended Solid
BOD	Biochemical Oxygen Demand



PO ₄ ³⁻	Phosphorus
PtCo	Platinum-Cobalt
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
NTU	Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
S	Sulphur
K	Potassium
Mg	Magnesium
Ca	Calcium
Fe	Iron
Na	Sodium
SMEWW	Standard Methods for Examination of Water and Wastewater
ζ	Zeta potential
Cl	Chlorine

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Water pollution is the contamination of streams, lakes, underground water, bays, or oceans by harmful substances like pathogenic microorganisms or toxic materials. Man, animals and plants require water that is moderately pure, and cannot survive if their water is loaded with toxic or harmful microorganisms.

Water quality is a term used to describe the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water, usually with respect to its suitability for a particular purpose. Water quality is determined by a variety of water characteristics. Measuring temperature, clarity, algae, acidity, bacteria, heavy metals, minerals and nutrient levels are some of the ways to determine water quality. Many pollutants are invisible, so measuring and monitoring are the initial steps in preserving water quality.

As population and industrial demands increase and water supplies become inadequate, more and more lands are turning to lakes, streams, or water reservoirs for their water supplies. Such change from ground to surface source of water supply has created many new problems for those engaged in the procurement and treatment of water for domestic and other uses. All surface water contains many organisms, which may complicate the provision of potable water (Palmer, 1959).



Algae is one of the major problems found in surface water. Some algae problems include the clogging of filters, harmful algal blooms, infestations in finished waters and toxicity. High concentration of nutrients in the water will encourage algae to grow rapidly making algae problems even more widespread in the water.

There are three techniques to remove algae from the water: physical, chemical and biological. In this study, biological method is used to remove micro-algae from domestic wastewater. This was chosen because of it is natural, friendly to environment and low cost operating as compared to physical and chemical methods.

1.1 Problem Statement

Present methods of waste disposal are intensifying the nuisance organism problems in water supplies, the number and kinds of algae and other organisms which grow in waters depend on environmental conditions. Fertilizing materials such as sewage and organic wastes from milk plants, canneries, slaughter houses, paper mills, starch factories and fish processing plants greatly increase productivity of the waters and their crops of algae and other plankton organisms, many of which produce problems when they become abundant (Palmer. 1959). This problem will become more widespread and severe as our urban population grows and industries continue to discharge their wastes into the streams. Consequently, removing micro-algae from the water body is very much desired and the method of removal has to be effective and friendly to the environment.



This study investigates the removal of micro-algae from wastewater by using *Aspergillus flavus* soft pellets as bio-coagulant. The biological method offers a choice by giving less impact on the environment and water quality and may be economical alternative to some other chemical and physical methods.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to remove micro-algae cells in the domestic wastewater by using *Aspergillus flavus* soft pellets as bio-coagulant. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the optimum *A. flavus* soft pellets (2.5 mm) concentration of (1% v/v, 3% v/v and 5% v/v) for micro-algae removal and the removal efficiency of selected parameters: Micro-algae cell/mL, TSS, VSS, COD, BOD, Nitrate, Phosphorus, Color, Turbidity and pH.
2. To determine the optimum retention time for micro-algae removal by using *A. flavus* soft pellets 2.5mm (5 % v/v) as bio-coagulant and the removal efficiency of selected parameters: Micro-algae cell/mL, TSS, VSS, COD, BOD, Nitrate, Phosphorus, Color, Turbidity and pH.
3. To investigate the effectiveness of *A. flavus* soft pellets sizes 4.3mm, 2.5 mm and 1.2 mm in removing micro-algae cells from domestic wastewater and the removal efficiency of selected parameters: Micro-algae cell/mL, TSS, VSS, Color and COD.

1.3 Importance and Significance of the Study

The importance and significance, which may be gained from this study, are:

1. The contribution in the investigation of the potential of *Aspergillus flavus* as a new bio-coagulant in wastewater treatment process and nutrients removal (nitrate, phosphorus) from wastewater
2. The trial to replace chemical coagulant by using natural bio-coagulant in wastewater treatment to avoid chemical sludge, to lower treatment cost and being friendly to the environment.

1.4 Scope of Research

1. To investigate three concentrations (1%, 3% and 5% v/v) of *A. flavus* soft pellets (2.5 mm) at six hours as retention time and determine the optimum concentration of *A. flavus*, which gives a good removal efficiency throughout the study of selected parameters: Micro-algae cell/mL, TSS, VSS, COD, BOD, nitrate, phosphorus, color, turbidity and pH.
2. To investigate *A. flavus* 5% v/v (2.5 mm) at different retention times (1, 3, 6, 9, 12 and 24 hours) and determine the optimum retention time for *A. flavus* 5% v/v, which record the best removal for selected parameters: Micro-algae cell/mL, TSS, VSS, COD, BOD, nitrate, phosphorus, color, turbidity and pH.