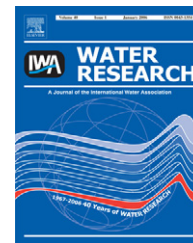


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Modeling the behaviors of adsorption and biodegradation in biological activated carbon filters

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ABSTRACT

This investigation developed a non-steady-state numerical model to differentiate the adsorption and biodegradation quantities of a biological activated carbon (BAC) column. The mechanisms considered in this model are adsorption, biodegradation, convection and diffusion. Simulations were performed to evaluate the effects of the major parameters, the packing media size and the superficial velocity, on the adsorption and biodegradation performances for the removal of dissolved organic carbon based on dimensionless analysis.

The model predictions are in agreement with the experimental data by adjusting the liquid-film mass transfer coefficient (k_{bf}), which has high correlation with the Stanton number. The Freundlich isotherm constant (N_F), together with the maximum specific substrate utilization rate (k_t) and the diffusion coefficient (D_t), is the most sensitive variable affecting the performance of the BAC. Decreasing the particle size results in more substrate diffusing across the biofilm, and increases the ratio of adsorption rather than biodegradation.

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1. Introduction

The biological activated carbon (BAC) process, which contains adsorption and biodegradation mechanisms, has been widely used in water and wastewater treatments for lowering the regeneration cost and prolonging the life of granular activated carbon (GAC) beds. Researchers and operators have been attempting to elucidate each mechanism for the purpose of simulation and optimization. For biodegradation, Hozalski et al. (1995) reported that the removal efficiency did not vary significantly under a certain empty-bed contact time (EBCT) ranging between 4 and 20 min. Melin and Ødegaard (2000) indicated that the optimum EBCT was approximately 20 min, since longer EBCT could not significantly increase the removal efficiency. Rittmann et al. (2002) reported that EBCT greater than 3.5 min had insignificant effects on dissolved

organic carbon (DOC) removal in pilot filters treating ozonated groundwater. Li et al. (2006) reported that the optimum EBCT was 15 min for an ozone-BAC process to treat raw waters.

A well-validated mathematical model can provide valuable information to assess and predict the performance of BAC, and some representative models are listed in Table 1 (Chang and Rittmann, 1987; Sakoda et al., 1996; Walker and Weatherley, 1997; Abumaizar et al., 1997; Hozalski and Bouwer, 2001; Badriyha et al., 2003). Chang and Rittmann (1987) developed a mathematical model that could quantify the extent of adsorption and biodegradation. One of its remarkable contributions is to illustrate and quantify the mass transfer of substrates diffusing through the biofilm, metabolized by microbes, and finally reaching the surface of GAC. The limitation is that it cannot be used under unsteady or plug-flow conditions. Sakoda et al. (1996) suggested a theoretical

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Nomenclature			
A_f	surface area of a BAC granule (L^2)	N_{Sh}	Sherwood number (dimensionless)
b_{tot}	total decay coefficient ($1/T$)	N_{St}	Stanton number (dimensionless)
d_p	packing media diameter (L)	q_0	Langmuir isotherm coefficients (M/M)
D_f	diffusivity in biofilm (L^2/T)	q_a	adsorption capacity (M/M)
D_z	dispersion coefficient in the liquid phase (L^2/T)	r_f	biofilm radius (L)
K_b	half-velocity concentration in water (M/L^3)	r_g	GAC granule radius (L)
k_b	max. specific substrate utilization rate in water (M/CFU-T)	S_b	substrate concentration in the liquid phase (M/L^3)
k_{bf}	liquid-film mass transfer coefficient (dimensionless)	S_{b0}	influent concentration (M/L^3)
K_f	half-velocity concentration in biofilm (M/L^3)	S_f	substrate concentration in the biofilm (M/L^3)
k_f	max. specific substrate utilization rate in biofilm (M/CFU-T)	V_g	volume of a GAC granule (L^3)
k_F	Freundlich isotherm coefficients (dimensionless)	x	distance along the BAC column (L)
K_L	Langmuir isotherm coefficients (dimensionless)	X_b	cell density in the liquid phase (CFU/ L^3)
L_c	column length (L)	X_f	biofilm density (CFU/ L^3)
L_f	length of the biofilm (L)	Y	specific yield (CFU/M)
m_g	mass of a GAC granule (M)	u_s	superficial velocity (L/T)
N_{Da}	Damköhler number (dimensionless)	Greek symbols	
N_F	Freundlich isotherm coefficients (dimensionless)	ε	porosity (dimensionless)
N_{Re}	Reynolds number (dimensionless)	ν	kinetic viscosity of the bulk solution (L^2/T)
		ρ_g	GAC granule apparent density (M/L^3)

model for a BAC column, in which the mechanisms included dispersion, convection, biodegradation and adsorption. The primary assumption for simplifying is that the substrate concentration on the interface between the biofilm and the

GAC is identical to that in the bulk solution. However, this assumption implies that there is no concentration reduction within the biofilm; thus, that model is not fit for the condition with thick biofilm. In 1997, Walker and Weatherley proposed a

Table 1 – Some of the representative BAC models

Reactor type	Mechanisms considered ^a	Kinetic condition				Mass transport description ^b	Solution method	References
		Substrate in bulk phase	Substrate in biofilm	Biofilm amount	Substrate in GAC			
Complex mixing	A, B	Non-steady monod	Monod	Non-steady	Non-equilibrium	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Analytical	Chang and Rittmann (1987)
Column	A, B, C, D	Non-steady no biodegradation	n.a. ^c	Steady	Equilibrium	1	Analytical	Sakoda et al. (1996)
Column	A, B	Uniform Monod	Monod	Non-steady	n.a. ^c	1	Analytical	Walker and Weatherley (1997)
Column	A, B, C	Non-steady no biodegradation	Monod	Steady	Non-equilibrium	1, 5	Analytical	Abumaizar et al. (1997)
Column	B, C, D	Non-steady Monod	Monod	Non-steady	n.a. ^c	1, 2, 3	Numerical	Hozalski and Bouwer (2001)
Column	A, B, C, D	Non-steady no biodegradation	Monod	Non-steady	Non-equilibrium	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Numerical	Badriyha et al. (2003)

^a A = adsorption, B = biodegradation, C = convection, D = dispersion.

^b 1 = bulk phase, 2 = interface between bulk phase and biofilm, 3 = biofilm, 4 = interface between biofilm and GAC, 5 = GAC.

^c Not analyzed in the article.

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