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The effects of short-term temperature variations on activated sludge settling

by

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ABSTRACT

Settling properties of activated sludge or mixed liquor suspended solids (MLSS) have been studied for more than 75 years at wastewater treatment plants. Temperature, together with MLSS concentration, has been acknowledged as important contributors to MLSS settling variations. Batch MLSS settling tests are performed on a regular basis at most of the plants. The majority of these MLSS settling test reports reflect the complete absence of any form of temperature compensation or even MLSS sample temperature (T_s) recordings.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the effects of short-term temperature variations on MLSS settling parameters. This is done by means of simplified theoretical calculations, followed by operational reactor temperature (T_r) observations, and batch MLSS settling tests. The experimental work concludes with the implementation of an on-line MLSS settling test procedure at a full-scale plant reactor to develop settling models based on diurnal T_r fluctuations. These settling models illustrate that parameter correlations improve when T_r is included in on-line MLSS concentration-based settling models.

The unhindered settling velocity of a single solid biofloc in water is considered in a simplified calculation to estimate the effect of temperature variations on MLSS settling. Over a T_s increase of 20°C, water density and viscosity reductions result in a calculated biofloc settling velocity increase of less than 0.5 m/hr. Similarly, biofloc density, shape, and size changes result in calculated biofloc settling velocity increases of about 11, 10, and 2 m/hr respectively over the 20°C T_s range.

Plant temperature recordings show significant short- to long-term variations. Ambient temperature (T_a) and T_r fluctuate about 20°C and 1.8°C respectively per day, and T_r changes by about 4°C within a week, as measured on-line at local plants during the test period in winter. The aeration method can have a significant impact on T_r . Differences in T_r in adjacent surface and bubble aeration reactors in the same plant were about 5°C. Large enough T_r and T_a variations exist at these local plants to affect MLSS settling test results.

The MLSS settling test cylinder environment and meteorological conditions have a direct influence on T_s during batch settling tests. Direct solar radiation increases the average T_s by 4.3°C, or by 0.15°C per minute, during a 30-minute MLSS settling test duration. This T_s



change leads to a sludge volume index (SVI) change of 63 mL/g, at an average SVI decrease of 14.8 mL/g per 1°C T_s increase. Changes to other parameters include an initial settling velocity (ISV) increase of about 0.12 m/hr for every 1°C T_s increase, together with a clarified supernatant turbidity increase of about 1.4 formazine nephelometric unit (FNU) for every 1°C T_s increase. T_s adjusts towards T_a before and during a batch MLSS settling test, thereby influencing MLSS settling results. Compensation for T_s variations during routine MLSS settling tests is nevertheless not reported as a common practice. To some extent, this is due to a lack of temperature-controlled MLSS settling test equipment.

An automated MLSS settling meter demonstrates a semi-continuous on-line method to determine settling parameters *in situ* at the operational T_r of a full-scale plant. A basic polynomial fits 11 MLSS settling parameters that indicate in most instances improved MLSS settling at increased T_r . The average SVI decreases by 14.8 mL/g for every 1°C T_r increase. Similarly, for every 1°C T_r increase, the maximum settling velocity (u_{max}) increase is 0.1 m/hr, and the time to reach maximum settling velocity (t_{umax}) decreases by 2.4 minutes. The incremental 5-minute duration average settling velocities increase over the first 15 minutes of a MLSS settling test, as the MLSS concentration decreases and the T_r increases. This direct incremental settling velocity trend with T_r is reversed between 15 and 30 minutes, as the average 5-minute MLSS settling velocity increases at a reduced T_r .

The inclusion of T_r in MLSS concentration-based settling best-fit correlations with SVI, u_{max} , and t_{umax} improves the coefficient of multiple determinations (R^2) by an average of 0.32. Best-fit SVI models with u_{max} and t_{umax} have R^2 -values of 0.90 and 0.95 respectively. The developed models are only valid for the individual reactor MLSS conditions within the experimental parameter ranges.

The main contribution of this study is to present temperature-based MLSS settling models. These models illustrate that an automated on-line MLSS settling meter is suitable to identify and model temperature related MLSS settling data with minimal experimental effort. A suitable approach is provided to improve the reliability of MLSS settling data, as effects of short-term temperature variations can be practically eliminated from settling test.

Keywords: activated sludge, batch test, biofloc, clarifier, MLSS, model, settling, SVI, temperature, wastewater.



SAMEVATTING

Besinkingskenmerke van geaktiveerde slyk of slykmengselsweefstowwe (SMSS) word al vir meer as 75 jaar by afvalwaterbehandelingsaanlegte bestudeer. Temperatuur, saam met SMSS konsentrasie, word erken as belangrike bydraers tot variasies in SMSS besinkingseienskappe. Lot SMSS besinkingstoetse word op 'n gereelde grondslag by die meeste aanlegte uitgevoer. Die meerderheid SMSS besinkingstoetsverslae toon egter geen vorm van temperatuur kompensasie of SMSS monstertemperatuur (T_s) lesings aan nie.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die gevolge van korttermyn temperatuur variasies op basiese SMSS besinkingsparameters te evalueer. Die evaluasie is gebaseer op vereenvoudigde teoretiese berekeninge, gevolg deur reaktor bedryfstemperatuur (T_r) observasies, sowel as om lot SMSS besinkingstoetse te doen. Die eksperimentele werk is afgesluit met die implementering van 'n aanlyn SMSS besinkingstoets prosedure by 'n volskaal aanlegreaktor. Wanneer T_r ingesluit word, verbeter besinkingsparameter korrelasies in die konvensionele SMSS konsentrasie-gebaseerde besinkingsmodelle.

SMSS besinking is vereenvoudig deur die vrye besinkingsnelheid van 'n enkele soliede biovlok te bereken, sodat die effek van temperatuur variasies op die lot SMSS besinkingstoets benader kan word. Met 'n T_s verhoging van 20°C sal waterdigtheid en -viskositeit verlagings tot 'n biovlok besinkingsnelheid verhoging van minder as 0.5 m/hr lei. Soortgelyk sal biovlokdigtheid, -vorm, en -grootte veranderings lei tot biovlok besinkingsnelheid verhogings van ongeveer 11, 10 en 2 m/hr respektiewelik.

Aanlegtemperatuur lesings toon betekenisvolle kort- tot langtermyn variasies. Omgewingstemperatuur (T_a) and T_r fluktrueer teen ongeveer 20°C en 1.8°C respektiewelik per dag, en T_r verander teen ongeveer 4°C per week, soos plaaslik aanlyn gemeet in winter. Die belugtingsmetode kan 'n beduidende invloed op T_r uitoefen. 'n Verskil van ongeveer 5°C is gemeet in T_r van oppervlak- en borrelbelugting reaktore in dieselfde aanleg. Daar is genoegsame T_r en T_a variasies op aanlegte om SMSS besinkingstoets resultate te beïnvloed.

Omgewings- en meteorologiese toestande by die besinkingstoets silinder het 'n direkte invloed op T_s gedurende lot SMSS besinkingstoetse. Direkte sonbestraling verhoog die gemiddelde T_s met 4.3°C , of teen 0.15°C per minuut, gedurende 'n tipiese 30-minute besinkingstoets periode. Hierdie T_s variasie veroorsaak 'n slykvolume-indeks (SVI)



verandering van 63 ml/g, teen 'n gemiddelde SVI verlaging van 14.8 ml/g per 1°C T_s verhoging. Veranderinge aan ander besinkingsparameters sluit in 'n aanvanklike besinkingsnelheid (ISV) verhoging van ongeveer 0.12 m/hr vir elke 1°C T_s verhoging, sowel as 'n verhoging van verhelderde bowater turbiditeit van ongeveer 1.4 formasiën nephelometries eenheid (FNU) per elke 1°C T_s verhoging. T_s verander na T_a voor en gedurende 'n lot SMSS besinkingstoets, en beïnvloed sodoende SMSS besinkingsresultate. T_s kompensasie werksywyses vir roetine SMSS besinkingstoetse is nie teenstaande steeds nie algemene praktyk nie, wat gedeeltelik toegeskryf kan word aan die gebrek aan temperatuur beheerbare besinkingstoets toerusting.

'n Outomatiese SMSS besinkingsmeter demonstreer 'n semi-kontinue aanlyn metode om besinkingsparameters te bepaal teen die operasionele T_r van 'n volskaal aanleg. 'n Basiese polinoom pas data van 11 besinkingsparameters om in die meeste gevalle 'n verbeterde SMSS besinkbaarheid by hoër T_r te toon. SVI verlaag teen 14.8 ml/g vir elke 1°C T_r verhoging. Vir die 1°C T_r verhoging is die maksimum besinkingsnelheid (u_{max}) verhoging 0.1 m/hr, en die verlaging in die tyd om u_{max} te bereik (t_{umax}) is 2.4 minute. In die eerste 15 minute van 'n besinkingstoets neem besinkingsnelheid toe soos SMSS konsentrasie afneem en T_r toeneem. Die direkte tendens tussen besinkingsnelheid en T_r is omgekeerd in die laaste 15 minute, en besinkingsnelheid neem dan toe by 'n verlaagde T_r .

Die insluiting van T_r in konsentrasie-gebaseerde besinkingsmodelle met SVI, u_{max} en t_{umax} verhoog die koëffisiënt van veelvuldige determinasies (R^2) teen 'n gemiddelde van 0.32. SVI modelle met u_{max} en t_{umax} het R^2 -waardes van 0.90 en 0.95 respektiewelik. Die ontwikkelde modelle is slegs geldig vir die individuele reaktor SMSS kondisies in die eksperimentele parameter gebied.

Die hoofbydrae van hierdie studie is om temperatuur-gebaseerde SMSS besinkingsmodelle te ontwikkel. Hierdie modelle illustreer dat 'n outomatiese SMSS besinkingsmeter geskik is om temperatuur-verwante SMSS besinkingsdata aanlyn te identifiseer en te modelleer met minimum eksperimentele moeite. 'n Geskikte benadering word verskaf om die betroubaarheid van SMSS besinkingsdata te verbeter, omdat invloede van korttermyn temperatuur variasies prakties uitgeskakel word in SMSS besinkingstoetse.

Sleutelwoorde: afvalwater, besinking, biovlok, geaktiveerde slyk, lot toets, model, riool, SMSS, SVI, temperatuur.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
SAMEVATTING	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
LIST OF EQUATIONS	XV
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS	XV
NOMENCLATURE	XVI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	XIX
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Experimental work.....	2
1.3 Project scope.....	2
1.4 Conclusions.....	3
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1 Background	4
2.2 Principles and monitoring of MLSS settling.....	5
2.2.1 MLSS settling and temperature relationship.....	5
2.2.2 MLSS settling and MLSS concentration relationship	5
2.2.3 MLSS settling parameters: identification and development	7
2.2.4 MLSS settling indexes	10
2.2.4.1 SVI	10
2.2.4.2 Alternative indexes.....	13
2.2.4.3 Future SVI use with settling parameters	14
2.2.5 SVI and settling velocity correlations.....	15
2.3 Operational plant temperature conditions.....	17
2.3.1 Overview	17
2.3.2 Modelling temperature variations.....	17
2.3.2.1 Ambient temperature.....	18



2.3.2.2	Raw wastewater temperature	19
2.3.2.3	Reactor temperature	20
2.3.2.4	Secondary settling tank temperature	21
2.4	Batch MLSS settling tests and temperature variations	22
2.5	On-line MLSS settling tests and temperature variations	23
2.6	Summary	23
2.7	Conclusions.....	24
2.8	Research aims.....	25
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	27
3.1	Background	27
3.2	Materials and methods.....	28
3.2.1	Modelling approach	28
3.2.2	Discrete biofloc settling theory	28
3.2.3	Data presentation	29
3.3	Results and discussion.....	30
3.3.1	Temperature effect on water viscosity.....	30
3.3.2	Temperature effect on water density	31
3.3.3	Settling response to water density and viscosity change	32
3.3.4	Settling response to biofloc density change	33
3.3.5	Settling response to biofloc size change	34
3.3.6	Settling response to biofloc shape change	35
3.4	Summary	36
3.5	Conclusions.....	38
4	TEMPERATURE OBSERVATIONS	39
4.1	Background	39
4.2	Materials and methods.....	40
4.2.1	Experimental approach	40
4.2.2	Temperature data collection	40
4.2.2.1	Plant reactors used for temperature observations	40
4.2.2.2	Short- and long-term temperature variation	41
4.2.2.3	Temperature data presentation.....	41



4.3	Results and discussion	42
4.3.1	Long-term temperature variation.....	42
4.3.2	Short-term temperature variations.....	46
4.4	Summary	48
4.5	Conclusions	49
5	BATCH MLSS SETTLING EVALUATION	50
5.1	Background	50
5.2	Materials and methods	52
5.2.1	Experimental approach	52
5.2.2	Settling measurement equipment	52
5.2.3	Settling profile determination.....	53
5.2.4	Temperature impact on MLSS concentration meter reading	54
5.2.5	Settling container size.....	54
5.2.6	Reactor zone samples.....	54
5.2.7	Additional preliminary tests: extended heating and cooling.....	55
5.2.8	Sample conditioning methods	56
5.3	Results and discussion	56
5.3.1	Impact of container size on MLSS settling	56
5.3.2	Impact of reactor zone on MLSS settling	57
5.3.3	Impact of container environment on MLSS settling	59
5.4	Summary	60
5.5	Conclusions	61
6	ON-LINE MLSS SETTLING EVALUATION	62
6.1	Background	62
6.2	Materials and methods	63
6.2.1	Experimental approach	63
6.2.2	MLSS settling meter configuration	64
6.2.3	MLSS settling meter velocity data collection method.....	67
6.2.4	MLSS settling meter velocity data collection boundaries	68
6.2.5	Data presentation	68
6.2.5.1	Data logger transfer and calculations	68
6.2.5.2	Empirical settling correlations and statistical comparisons.....	70



6.3	Results and discussion	70
6.3.1	h and T_r diurnal variation	71
6.3.2	MLSS concentration and T_r diurnal variation	72
6.3.3	SVI and T_r diurnal variation	73
6.3.4	Model fitting: SVI dependence on MLSS concentration and T_r	74
6.3.4.1	SVI link to MLSS concentration	74
6.3.4.2	SVI link to T_r	75
6.3.4.3	SVI link to MLSS concentration and T_r	76
6.3.5	Model fitting: u_{max} dependence on MLSS concentration and T_r	77
6.3.5.1	u_{max} link to MLSS concentration	77
6.3.5.2	u_{max} link to T_r	78
6.3.5.3	u_{max} link to MLSS concentration and T_r	79
6.3.6	Model fitting: t_{umax} dependence on MLSS concentration and T_r	80
6.3.6.1	t_{umax} link to MLSS concentration	80
6.3.6.2	t_{umax} link to T_r	81
6.3.6.3	t_{umax} link to MLSS concentration and T_r	82
6.3.7	Model fitting: Summary of curve-fitting correlations	83
6.3.8	SVI and settling parameter correlation procedure	83
6.3.8.1	SVI and u_{max} correlation	83
6.3.8.2	SVI and t_{umax} correlation	84
6.3.9	SVI correlations with u_{max} and t_{umax} : Summary of curve-fitting results	85
6.3.10	Simplified settling models: MLSS concentration and T_r	87
6.3.10.1	SVI correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r	88
6.3.10.2	u_{max} correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r	89
6.3.10.3	t_{umax} correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r	90
6.3.10.4	u_{ave} correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	91
6.3.10.5	h correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	92
6.3.10.6	Incremental velocity u_1 to u_6 simulation over 30 minutes	93
6.3.10.7	u_1 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	94
6.3.10.8	u_2 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	95
6.3.10.9	u_3 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	96
6.3.10.10	u_4 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	97
6.3.10.11	u_5 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	98
6.3.10.12	u_6 correlation with MLSS concentration and T_r variation	99
6.3.11	Settling models results summary	100



6.3.12	Settling models simulation results.....	101
6.4	Summary	101
6.5	Conclusions.....	102
7	SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	104
8	CONCLUSIONS.....	107
9	RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION	109
10	REFERENCES	110
11	APPENDICES	127
11.1	Appendix A: T_r measurements: surface and bubble aeration plant data.....	128
11.2	Appendix B: Raw sewage plant inflow diurnal temperature variation	129
11.3	Appendix C: MLSS concentration meter reading T_s-based variations	130
11.4	Appendix D: Batch MLSS settling data	131
11.4.1	SVI variation.....	133
11.4.2	Zone settling velocity variation.....	135
11.4.3	Turbidity variation.....	137
11.5	Appendix E: On-line meter data	139
11.6	Appendix F: Photograph of MLSS settling meter	142
11.7	Appendix G: Settleability factors summary.....	143
11.7.1	Biofloc composition and structure	143
11.7.2	Wastewater characteristics.....	144
11.7.3	Process and reactor configuration	146
11.7.4	Operational factors	148
11.7.5	Settleability failure identification.....	149
11.7.6	Settleability impacts due to filamentous micro-organism dominance	150
	Appendix H: Summary of regression model variable results	151



LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 MLSS settleability criteria according to four settling stages.....	8
Table 2-2 MLSS settling parameters development techniques and use	9
Table 2-3 Reported SVI test deficiencies or limitations	11
Table 2-4 SVI test method according to APHA (1998).....	12
Table 2-5 Alternative MLSS settling indexes	13
Table 2-6 Experimental conditions for SVI use in settling parameter correlations	15
Table 2-7 Experimental conditions for SVI use in settling velocity correlations	16
Table 2-8 Typical range of energy contributions to influence T_r	18
Table 3-1 Simulation ranges used for water and biofloc characteristics	29
Table 3-2 Biofloc discrete settling velocity link to temperature and biofloc characteristics.....	37
Table 4-1 Sizes of five BNR reactors in two plants used in temperature observations.....	41
Table 4-2 Seasonal and daytime temperature variations: surface and bubble aeration	42
Table 5-1 Batch MLSS settling tests procedures (APHA, 1998).....	51
Table 5-2 Batch MLSS settling tests container size	54
Table 5-3 Impact of container size on MLSS settling	56
Table 5-4 Impact of container environment temperature on settling (T_r 19.6°C, T_a 17.9°C).....	59
Table 6-1 Experimental data range for on-line MLSS settling evaluation	68
Table 6-2 Best-fit MLSS settling correlations R^2 containing MLSS concentration and T_r	83
Table 6-3 Summary of SVI correlations with u_{max} and t_{umax}	85
Table 6-4 Coefficients for polynomial: u_{max} and t_{umax} correlations with SVI	86
Table 6-5 Summary of regression model constants for settling parameters	87
Table 6-6 Settling parameters model prediction over experimental range	100
Table 6-7 Modelled settling parameters simulation based on T_r variation	101
Table 7-1 MLSS settling parameter variation summary	106
Table 11-1 Long-term T_r variation data	128
Table 11-2 Test data: MLSS concentration meter reading variation with T_s	130
Table 11-3 Summary of experimental batch settling test reactor zone conditions and results	131
Table 11-4 Batch MLSS settling sample extended cooling and heating	131
Table 11-5 Batch settling test results data, with temperature and container size variation	132
Table 11-6 Summary of on-line experimental data	139
Table 11-7 Biofloc composition and structural properties affecting settling aspects.....	143
Table 11-8 Wastewater characteristics affecting settling aspects.....	144
Table 11-9 Process and reactor configuration affecting settling factors.....	146



Table 11-10 Operational factors affecting settling factors.....	148
Table 11-11 Settleability failure identification guidelines.....	149
Table 11-12 <i>Microthrix parvicella</i> dominance and settling effects in a NDBEPR process	150
Table 11-13 Regression variable results	151



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 MLSS settling behaviour classified as Class I to IV according to MLSS concentration and interparticle actions	6
Figure 2-2 Annual T_a profiles for Johannesburg, South Africa.....	19
Figure 3-1 Unhindered (B) and hindered (C, D, E) settling of MLSS sample (A) in a container for three periods (a, b, c) of settling process	27
Figure 3-2 Water viscosity as a function of water temperature.....	31
Figure 3-3 Water density as a function of water temperature	31
Figure 3-4 Biofloc settling velocity in water as a function of water viscosity and density	32
Figure 3-5 Biofloc settling velocity as a function of temperature and biofloc density	33
Figure 3-6 Biofloc settling velocity as a function of temperature and biofloc size.....	35
Figure 3-7 Biofloc settling velocity as a function of temperature and biofloc shape.....	36
Figure 4-1 T_{raw} and T_a profiles over 42 days, plant 1	43
Figure 4-2 T_r and T_a profiles over 19 days, plant reactor 1a.....	44
Figure 4-3 T_r and T_a profiles over 10 days, plant reactor 1b.....	45
Figure 4-4 T_r and T_a profiles over 11 days, plant reactor 1c.....	46
Figure 4-5 Diurnal T_r and T_a profile, plant reactor 1b	47
Figure 4-6 Diurnal T_r and T_a profile, plant reactor 1c	48
Figure 5-1 MLSS settling profiles in a cylinder and a secondary settling tank	50
Figure 5-2 Batch MLSS settling profile with 4 settling stages	53
Figure 5-3 Settling parameters changes throughout three BNR reactor zones	57
Figure 6-1 Schematic diagram of main components of the MLSS settling meter	64
Figure 6-2 Two consecutive on-line MLSS settling profiles recorded by the settling meter	67
Figure 6-3 Data and fitted curves of temporal variations in T_r and h	71
Figure 6-4 Data and fitted curves of temporal variations in T_r and MLSS concentration.....	72
Figure 6-5 Data and fitted curves of temporal variations in T_r and SVI.....	73
Figure 6-6 SVI related to MLSS concentration.....	74
Figure 6-7 SVI data scatter according to T_r variation.....	75
Figure 6-8 SVI related to MLSS concentration and T_r	76
Figure 6-9 u_{max} related to MLSS concentration	77
Figure 6-10 u_{max} data scatter according to T_r variation.....	78
Figure 6-11 u_{max} related to MLSS concentration and T_r	79
Figure 6-12 t_{umax} related to MLSS concentration	80
Figure 6-13 t_{umax} data scatter according to T_r variation.....	81



Figure 6-14 $t_{u_{max}}$ related to MLSS concentration and T_r	82
Figure 6-15 u_{max} related to SVI.....	84
Figure 6-16 $t_{u_{max}}$ related to SVI.....	85
Figure 6-17 SVI dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	88
Figure 6-18 u_{max} dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	89
Figure 6-19 $t_{u_{max}}$ dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	90
Figure 6-20 u_{ave} dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	92
Figure 6-21 h dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	93
Figure 6-22 u_1 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	94
Figure 6-23 u_2 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	95
Figure 6-24 u_3 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	96
Figure 6-25 u_4 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	97
Figure 6-26 u_5 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	98
Figure 6-27 u_6 dependency on MLSS concentration and T_r	99
Figure 11-1 T_{raw} and T_a data points and diurnal profiles.....	129
Figure 11-2 SVI, different containers, T_s after 30 min., MLSS 4210 mg/l.....	133
Figure 11-3 SVI, different containers, T_s after 0 and 30 min., MLSS 3930 mg/l.....	133
Figure 11-4 SVI, different containers, T_s after 5 min., MLSS 4250 mg/l.....	134
Figure 11-5 SVI, different containers, T_s after 0, 15 and 30 min., MLSS 4470 mg/l.....	134
Figure 11-6 Initial settling velocity, T_s after 30 min., MLSS 4210 mg/l.....	135
Figure 11-7 ISV, T_s after 0 and 30 min., MLSS 3930 mg/l.....	135
Figure 11-8 ISV, T_s after 5 min., MLSS 4250 mg/l.....	136
Figure 11-9 ISV, T_s after 0, 15 and 30 min., MLSS 4470 mg/l.....	136
Figure 11-10 Turbidity, 30 min. settling, T_s after 30 min., MLSS 4210 mg/l.....	137
Figure 11-11 Turbidity, 30 min. settling, T_s after 0 and 30 min, MLSS 3930 mg/l.....	137
Figure 11-12 Turbidity, 30 min. settling, T_s after 5 min., MLSS 4250 mg/l.....	138
Figure 11-13 Turbidity, 30 min. settling, T_s after 0, 15 and 30 min., MLSS 4470 mg/l.....	138
Figure 11-14 Consecutive 30-minute settling profiles from MLSS settling meter data, h and T_a readings over 12 hours.....	139
Figure 11-15 Two-day T_a and T_r profiles.....	140
Figure 11-16 Two-day T_r and MLSS concentration profiles.....	140
Figure 11-17 Two-day SVI and T_r profiles.....	141
Figure 11-18 Two-day SVI and MLSS concentration profiles.....	141



LIST OF EQUATIONS

$SVI = 872.4 - \frac{4624176.1}{MLSS} + \frac{4823.4}{T_r}$ [mℓ/g]	Equation 6-1.....	88
$u_{max} = -2.2 + \frac{14785.4}{MLSS} - \frac{8.3}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-2.....	89
$t_{u_{max}} = 239.6 - \frac{1290679.9}{MLSS} + \frac{939.9}{T_r}$ [minute]	Equation 6-3.....	90
$u_{ave} = -2.9 + \frac{18433.8}{MLSS} - \frac{15.2}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-4.....	91
$h = 1794.0 - \frac{9200670.3}{MLSS} - \frac{7744.0}{T_r}$ [mm]	Equation 6-5.....	92
$u_1 = -1.2 + \frac{14418.7}{MLSS} - \frac{32.0}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-6.....	94
$u_2 = -2.7 + \frac{33145}{MLSS} - \frac{74.8}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-7.....	95
$u_3 = -3.7 + \frac{25152.1}{MLSS} - \frac{26.7}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-8.....	96
$u_4 = -4.2 + \frac{19565.0}{MLSS} + \frac{3.4}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-9.....	97
$u_5 = -3.4 + \frac{11822.8}{MLSS} + \frac{18.8}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-10.....	99
$u_6 = -2.7 + \frac{8411.6}{MLSS} + \frac{18.9}{T_r}$ [m/hr]	Equation 6-11.....	100

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 MLSS settling meter and output display	142
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NOMENCLATURE

Symbol / Acronym	Definition	Page when first used
a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k	regression coefficients	87
a, b, c	three periods of settling process	27
a, b, c	plant reactors used in experimental work	40
A, B, C, D, E	five settling stages of MLSS setting profile	27
Ave.	average	87
BNR	biological nutrient removal	1
C	Carbon	144
°C	degree(s) Celsius	18
CaCO ₃	calcium carbonate	145
C _d	drag coefficient	29
Cl ₂	chlorine	148
cm	centimetre	52
COD	chemical oxygen demand	144
d	day(s)	148
d _a	diameter biofloc	29
DO	dissolved oxygen	20
DSVI	diluted sludge volume index	13
e.g.	for example	22
<i>et al.</i>	and others	1
exp, e	exponent	9
ECP	exocellular polymers	143
EPBNR	excess phosphorus biological nutrient removal	148
f	function	9
FOG	fats, oils and grease	145
FNU	formazine nephelometric unit	52
g	gram(s)	146
g	gravitational acceleration constant	29
G	solids flux	9
g/l	gram per litre	9
gSS/l	gram suspended solids per litre	54
g/ml	gram per millilitre	34
h	settling meter liquid / MLSS interface height	67
hr	hour(s)	73
HRT	hydraulic retention time	146
i, ii, iii, iv	4 methods to acquire G	9
<i>in situ</i>	in natural or original place	23
ISV	initial settling velocity	8
kg	kilogram(s)	150
kHz	kiloHertz	140
kg/m ³	kilogram per cubic metre	29
ℓ	litres	1
LCVFA	long chain volatile fatty acid	144
m	metre(s)	15
mm	millimetre	29
mA	milliAmpere	64
mg	milligram(s)	59



mg/ℓ	milligram per litre	53
mgN/ℓ	milligram nitrogen per litre	21
mgSS/ℓ	milligram suspended solids per litre	8
meq/gSS	milliequivalent per g suspended solids	143
mMol	milliMole concentration	144
m/hr	metre per hour	8
min.	minute(s)	8
mℓ	millilitres	13
mℓ/g	millilitres per gram	8
mℓ/ℓ	millilitres per litre	10
MLSS	mixed liquor suspended solids	1
MLVSS	mixed liquor volatile suspended solids	145
mV	millivolt	143
n	number of observations	53
n	constant in empirical Vesilind equation	9
N	nitrogen	144
N/A	not available / applicable	54
NDBEPR	nitrification-denitrification biological-excess-phosphorus removal	150
NH ₄ ⁺	ammonium	144
NO ₃ ⁻	nitrate	21
NO ₂ ⁻	nitrite	21
Ns/m ²	Newton seconds per square metre	29
o-PO ₄	ortho-phosphate	131
P	phosphorus	144
pH	logarithmic scale of activity of hydrogen ion	145
PLC	program logic controller	64
p value	probability value	151
R ²	coefficient of multiple determinations	30
RAS	return activated sludge	21
RBCOD	readily biodegradable COD	147
Re	Reynolds number	29
rpm	revolutions per minute	12
s	second	148
S	sulphide	144
SBR	sequencing batch reactor	38
SBCOD	slowly biodegradable chemical oxygen demand	144
SG	specific gravity	143
SRT	sludge retention time	148
SS	suspended solids	8
SSVI	stirred specific volume index	12
SSVI _{3.5}	stirred specific volume index at 3.5 g/ℓ	13
St. dev.	standard deviation	53
SV ₃₀	30-minute settled sludge volume	7
SVI	sludge volume index	3
SVI _{3.5}	SVI at 3.5 g/ℓ	13
T	temperature	131
T _a , T _a	ambient temperature (atmospheric)	1
T _s , T _s	sample temperature	1
T _r , T _r	reactor temperature	1



T_{raw} , T_{raw}	raw sewage (wastewater) temperature	17
T_0 , T_5 , T_{15} , T_{30}	temperature after 0, 5, 15, and 30 minutes	132
t	time	3
TDS	total dissolved solids	144
Temp	temperature	139
Tur	supernatant turbidity	132
$t_{\text{u}_{\text{max}}}$	time to reach u_{max}	3
t-ratio	ratio of estimated parameter value to estimated parameter standard error	151
u	discrete biofloc settling velocity	29
u_1 , u_2 , u_3 , u_4 , u_5 , u_6	incremental 5-minute settling velocities	68
u_{max}	maximum (constant) 1-minute settling velocity	3
u_{ave}	average 30-minute settling velocity	70
V	volt	64
v_0	constant in empirical Vesilind equation	9
vs.	versus	9
V_s	ZSV in empirical Vesilind equation	9
VFA	volatile fatty acid	144
WCW	water care works	98
X	MLSS concentration	9
x	independent regression variables	31
x , x_1 , x_2	horizontal axes coordinates in 2- and 3-D graphs	30
y	dependent regression variables	31
y , y_1 , y_2	vertical axes coordinates in 2- and 3-D graphs	30
ZSV	zone settling velocity	8
Φ	shape factor of biofloc	28
ε	random error	87
μ	dynamic (or absolute) viscosity	29
μm	micrometre(s) [10^{-6} m]	29
ρ_a	density of biofloc	29
ρ_w	density of liquid	29
σ^2	error variance	87
1, 2	experimental plants	40
1, 2, 3, 4	four stages in MLSS settling profile	8
1, 2, 3, 4	successive sections in aerobic zone	54
2-D	2 dimensional graphs or correlations	29
3-D	3 dimensional graphs or correlations	30
I, II, III, IV	four classes of MLSS settling	6
$<$, \leq , $=$, $>$	smaller, smaller or equal, equal, larger	8
$/$, \cdot	divide, multiply	9
%	percentage	21



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