

A Methodology for Proper Waste Disposal, Treatment, and Management Enhancing Sustainable Development in the Third World.

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ABSTRACT

Waste management is the collection, transport, processing or disposal, managing and monitoring of waste materials. The term usually relates to materials produced by human activity, and the process is generally undertaken to reduce their effect on health, the environment or aesthetics. Waste management is a distinct practice from resource recovery which focuses on delaying the rate of consumption of natural resources. All waste materials, whether they are solid, liquid, gaseous or radioactive fall within the remit of waste management.

Waste management practices can differ for developed and developing nations, for urban and rural areas, and for residential and industrial producers. Management of non-hazardous waste residential and institutional waste in metropolitan areas is usually the responsibility of local government authorities, while management for non-hazardous commercial and industrial waste is usually the responsibility of the generator subject to local, national or international authorities.

The third world has a lot of benefits from waste if properly managed; this paper is an expository on the methodology to appropriate waste disposal, treatment and overall management with sewage being the emphasis due to its availability and easy treatment and processing, hence, enhancing sustainability and development.

(Keywords: biological waste management, developing world, sustainability, development, sewage, biosolids)

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous current methodologies for waste disposal including the following:

Landfill: Disposal of waste in a landfill involves burying the waste and this remains a common practice in most countries. Landfills were often established in abandoned or unused quarries, mining voids or borrow pits. A properly designed and well-managed landfill can be a hygienic and relatively inexpensive method of disposing of waste materials. Older, poorly designed or poorly managed landfills can create a number of adverse environmental impacts such as wind-blown litter, attraction of vermin, and generation of liquid leachate. Another common product of landfills is gas (mostly composed of methane and carbon dioxide), which is produced as organic waste and breaks down anaerobically. This gas can create odor problems, kill surface vegetation and is a greenhouse gas.

Design characteristics of a modern landfill include methods to contain leachate such as clay or plastic lining material. Deposited waste is normally compacted to increase its density and stability and covered to prevent attracting vermin (such as mice or rats). Many landfills also have landfill gas extraction systems installed to extract the landfill gas. Gas is pumped out of the landfill using perforated pipes and flared off or burnt in a gas engine to generate electricity.

Incineration: Incineration is a disposal method in which solid organic wastes are subjected to combustion so as to convert them into residue and gaseous products. This method is useful for disposal of residue of both solid waste management and solid residue from waste water management. This process reduces the volumes of solid waste to 20 to 30 percent of the original volume. Incineration and other high temperature waste treatment systems are sometimes described as "thermal treatment". Incinerators

convert waste materials into heat, gas, steam and ash.

Incineration is carried out both on a small scale by individuals and on a large scale by industry. It is used to dispose of solid, liquid and gaseous waste. It is recognized as a practical method of disposing of certain hazardous waste materials (such as biological medical waste). Incineration is a controversial method of waste disposal, due to issues such as emission of gaseous pollutants.

Incineration is common in countries such as Japan where land is more scarce, as these facilities generally do not require as much area as landfills. Waste-to-energy (WtE) or energy-from-waste (EfW) are broad terms for facilities that burn waste in a furnace or boiler to generate heat, steam or electricity. Combustion in an incinerator is not always perfect and there have been concerns about pollutants in gaseous emissions from incinerator stacks. Particular concern has focused on some very persistent organic compounds such as dioxins, furans, and PAHs, which may be created and which may have serious environmental consequence

Recycling: Recycling is a resource recovery practice that refers to the collection and reuse of waste materials such as empty beverage containers. The materials from which the items are made can be reprocessed into new products. Material for recycling may be collected separately from general waste using dedicated bins and collection vehicles, a procedure called curb-side collection. In some communities, the owner of the waste is required to separate the materials into various different bins (e.g. for paper, plastics, metals) prior to its collection. In other communities, all recyclable materials are placed in a single bin for collection, and the sorting is handled later at a central facility. The latter method is known as "single-stream recycling."

The most common consumer products recycled include aluminum such as beverage cans, copper such as wire, steel from food and aerosol cans, old steel furnishings or equipment, polyethylene and PET bottles, glass bottles and jars, paperboard cartons, newspapers, magazines and light paper, and corrugated fiberboard boxes.

Sustainability: The management of waste is a key component in a business' ability to

maintaining ISO14001 accreditation. Companies are encouraged to improve their environmental efficiencies each year by eliminating waste through resource recovery practices, which are sustainability-related activities. One way to do this is by shifting away from waste management to resource recovery practices like recycling materials such as glass, food scraps, paper and cardboard, plastic bottles and metal.

Biological Re-processing: Recoverable materials that are organic in nature, such as plant material, food scraps, and paper products, can be recovered through composting and digestion processes to decompose the organic matter. The resulting organic material is then recycled as mulch or compost for agricultural or landscaping purposes. In addition, waste gas from the process (such as methane) can be captured and used for generating electricity and heat (CHP/cogeneration) maximizing efficiencies. The intention of biological processing in waste management is to control and accelerate the natural process of decomposition of organic matter.

Energy Recovery: The energy content of waste products can be harnessed directly by using them as a direct combustion fuel, or indirectly by processing them into another type of fuel. Thermal treatment ranges from using waste as a fuel source for cooking or heating and the use of the gas fuel, to fuel for boilers to generate steam and electricity in a turbine. Pyrolysis and gasification are two related forms of thermal treatment where waste materials are heated to high temperatures with limited oxygen availability. The process usually occurs in a sealed vessel under high pressure.

Avoidance and Reduction Methods: An important method of waste management is the prevention of waste material being created, also known as waste reduction. Methods of avoidance include reuse of second-hand products, repairing broken items instead of buying new, designing products to be refillable or reusable (such as cotton instead of plastic shopping bags), encouraging consumers to avoid using disposable products (such as disposable cutlery), removing any food/liquid remains from cans and packaging, and designing products that use less

material to achieve the same purpose (for example, lightweighting of beverage cans).

SUSTAINABILITY, RECYCLING AND TREATMENT OF SEWAGE

Sewage

Sewage treatment is the process of removing contaminants from wastewater and household sewage, both runoff (effluents), domestic, commercial and institutional. It includes physical, chemical, and biological processes to remove physical, chemical and biological contaminants. Its objective is to produce an environmentally safe fluid waste stream (or treated effluent) and a solid waste (or treated sludge) suitable for disposal or reuse (usually as farm fertilizer). Using advanced technology it is now possible to re-use sewage effluent for drinking water.

The objective of sewage treatment is to produce a disposable effluent without causing harm to the surrounding environment, and prevent pollution.

Sewage can be treated close to where the sewage is created, a decentralized system, or be collected and transported by a network of pipes and pump stations to a municipal treatment plant, a centralized system. Sewage collection and treatment is typically subject to local, state and federal regulations and standards. Industrial sources of sewage often require specialized treatment processes

Sewage treatment generally involves three stages, called primary, secondary and tertiary treatment.

- **Primary treatment** consists of temporarily holding the sewage in a quiescent basin where heavy solids can settle to the bottom while oil, grease and lighter solids float to the surface. The settled and floating materials are removed and the remaining liquid may be discharged or subjected to secondary treatment.
- **Secondary treatment** removes dissolved and suspended biological matter. Secondary treatment is typically performed by indigenous, water-borne micro-organisms in a managed habitat. Secondary treatment may require a separation process to remove the micro-organisms from the treated water prior to discharge or tertiary treatment.
- **Tertiary treatment** is sometimes defined as anything more than primary and secondary treatment in order to allow rejection into a highly sensitive or fragile ecosystem (estuaries, low-flow rivers, coral reefs,). Treated water is sometimes disinfected chemically or physically (for example, by lagoons and microfiltration) prior to discharge into a stream, river, bay, lagoon or wetland, or it can be used for the irrigation of a golf course, green way or park. If it is sufficiently clean, it can also be used for groundwater recharge or agricultural purposes.

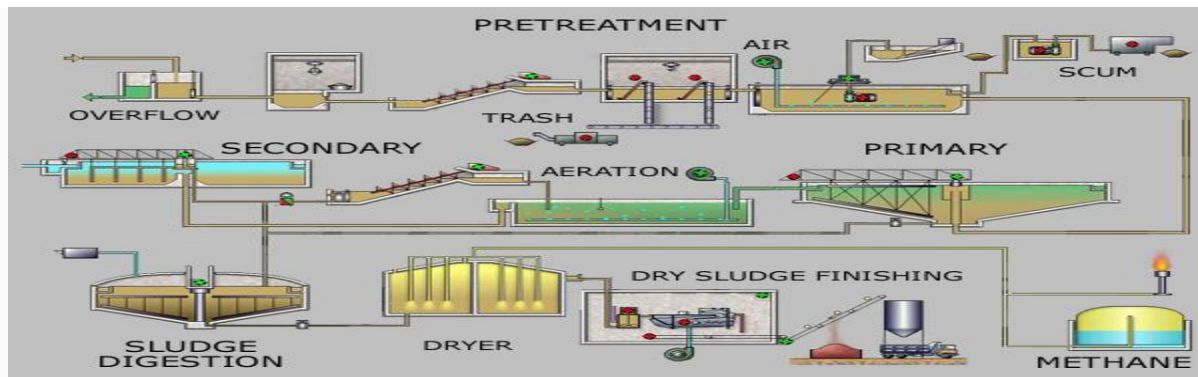


Figure 1: Simplified Process Flow Diagram for a Typical Large-Scale Treatment Plant.

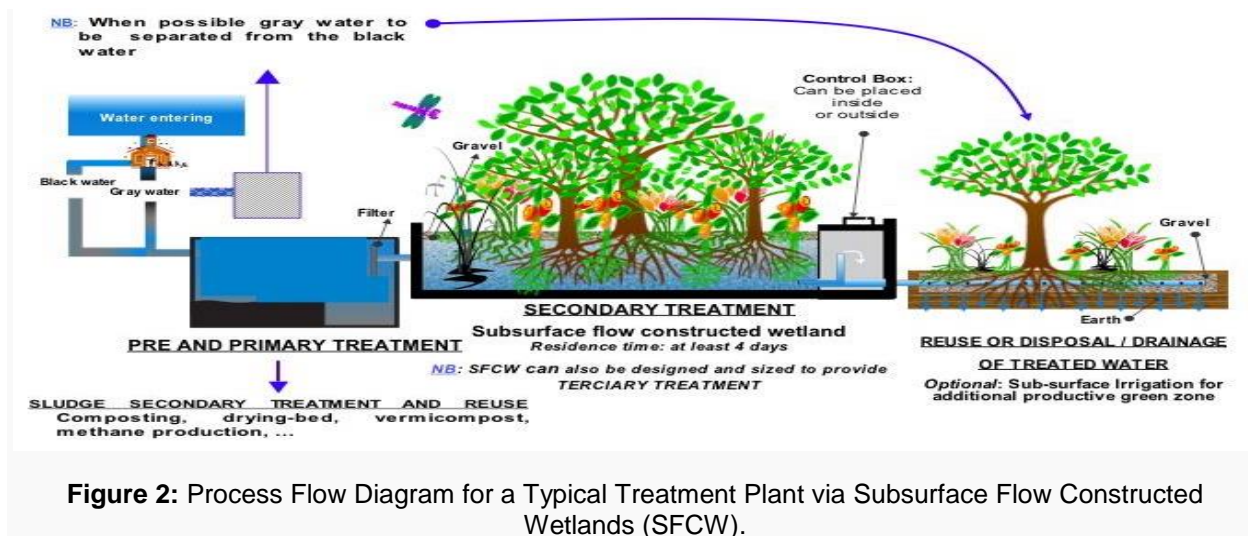


Figure 2: Process Flow Diagram for a Typical Treatment Plant via Subsurface Flow Constructed Wetlands (SFCW).

Pre-Treatment

Pretreatment removes all materials that can be easily collected from the raw sewage before they damage or clog the pumps and sewage lines of primary treatment clarifiers. Objects that are commonly removed during pretreatment include trash, tree limbs, leaves, branches, and other large objects.

The influent in sewage water passes through a bar screen to remove all large objects like cans, rags, sticks, plastic packets etc. carried in the sewage stream. This is most commonly done with an automated mechanically raked bar screen in modern plants serving large populations, while in smaller or less modern plants, a manually cleaned screen may be used. The raking action of a mechanical bar screen is typically paced according to the accumulation on the bar screens and/or flow rate. The solids are collected and later disposed in a landfill, or incinerated. Bar screens or mesh screens of varying sizes may be used to optimize solids removal. If gross solids are not removed, they become entrained in pipes and moving parts of the treatment plant, and can cause substantial damage and inefficiency in the process

Grit Removal: Pretreatment may include a sand or grit channel or chamber, where the velocity of the incoming sewage is adjusted to allow the settlement of sand, grit, stones, and broken glass. These particles are removed because they may damage pumps and other equipment. For small

sanitary sewer systems, the grit chambers may not be necessary, but grit removal is desirable at larger plants. Grit chambers come in 3 types: horizontal grit chambers, aerated grit chambers and vortex grit chambers.

Flow Equalization: Clarifiers and mechanized secondary treatment are more efficient under uniform flow conditions. Equalization basins may be used for temporary storage of diurnal or wet-weather flow peaks. Basins provide a place to temporarily hold incoming sewage during plant maintenance and a means of diluting and distributing batch discharges of toxic or high-strength waste which might otherwise inhibit biological secondary treatment (including portable toilet waste, vehicle holding tanks, and septic tank pumpers). Flow equalization basins require variable discharge control, typically include provisions for bypass and cleaning, and may also include aerators. Cleaning may be easier if the basin is downstream of screening and grit removal

Fat and Grease Removal: In some larger plants, fat and grease are removed by passing the sewage through a small tank where skimmers collect the fat floating on the surface. Air blowers in the base of the tank may also be used to help recover the fat as a froth. Many plants, however, use primary clarifiers with mechanical surface skimmers for fat and grease removal.

PRIMARY TREATMENT

In the primary sedimentation stage, sewage flows through large tanks, commonly called "pre-settling basins", "primary sedimentation tanks" or "primary clarifiers". The tanks are used to settle sludge while grease and oils rise to the surface and are skimmed off. Primary settling tanks are usually equipped with mechanically driven scrapers that continually drive the collected sludge towards a hopper in the base of the tank where it is pumped to sludge treatment facilities. Grease and oil from the floating material can sometimes be recovered for saponification.

SECONDARY TREATMENT

Secondary treatment is designed to substantially degrade the biological content of the sewage which are derived from human waste, food waste, soaps and detergent. The majority of municipal plants treat the settled sewage liquor using aerobic biological processes. To be effective, the biota require both oxygen and food to live. The bacteria and protozoa consume biodegradable soluble organic contaminants (e.g. sugars, fats, organic short-chain carbon molecules, etc.) and bind much of the less soluble fractions into floc. Secondary treatment systems are classified as *fixed-film* or *suspended-growth* systems.

- Fixed-film or attached growth systems include trickling filters, biotowers, and rotating biological contactors, where the biomass grows on media and the sewage passes over its surface. The fixed-film principle has further developed into Moving Bed Biofilm Reactors (MBBR), and Integrated Fixed-Film Activated Sludge (IFAS) processes. An MBBR system typically requires smaller footprint than suspended-growth systems.
- Suspended-growth systems include activated sludge, where the biomass is mixed with the sewage and can be operated in a smaller space than trickling filters that treat the same amount of water. However, fixed-film systems are more able to cope with drastic changes in the amount of biological material and can provide higher removal rates for organic material and suspended solids than suspended growth systems.

Roughing filters are intended to treat particularly strong or variable organic loads, typically industrial, to allow them to then be treated by conventional secondary treatment processes. Characteristics include filters filled with media to which wastewater is applied. They are designed to allow high hydraulic loading and a high level of aeration. On larger installations, air is forced through the media using blowers. The resultant wastewater is usually within the normal range for conventional treatment processes.

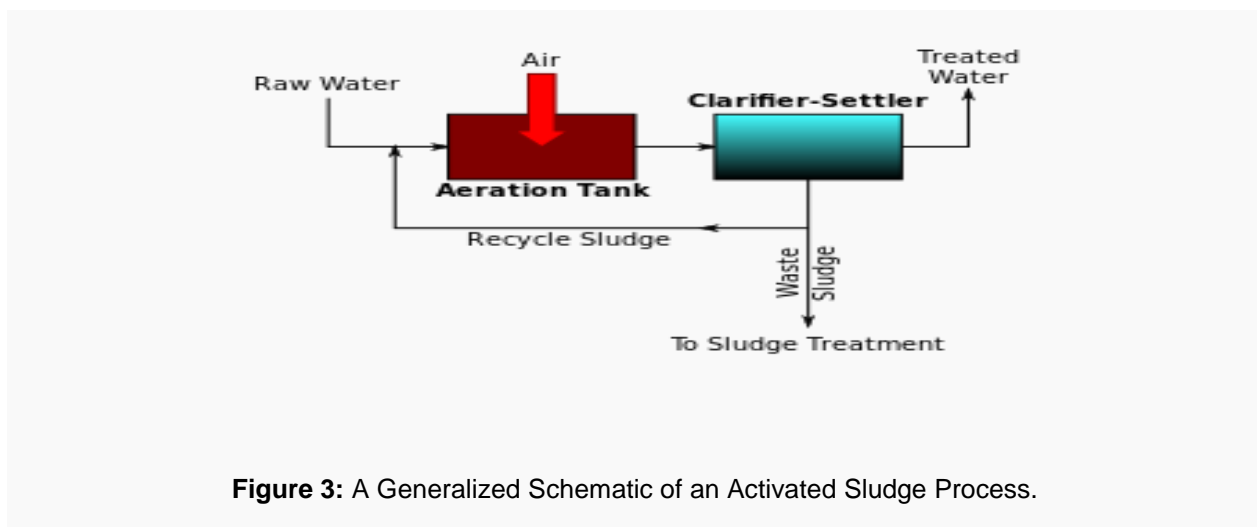


Figure 3: A Generalized Schematic of an Activated Sludge Process.

A filter removes a small percentage of the suspended organic matter, while the majority of the organic matter undergoes a change of character, only due to the biological oxidation and nitrification taking place in the filter. With this aerobic oxidation and nitrification, the organic solids are converted into coagulated suspended mass, which is heavier and bulkier, and can settle to the bottom of a tank. The effluent of the filter is therefore passed through a sedimentation tank, called a secondary clarifier, secondary settling tank or humus tank.

Activated Sludge: In general, activated sludge plants encompass a variety of mechanisms and processes that use dissolved oxygen to promote the growth of biological floc that substantially removes organic material. Biological floc, as mentioned above, is an ecosystem of living biota that subsists on nutrients from the inflowing primary settling tank (or clarifier) effluent. These mostly carbonaceous dissolved solids undergo aeration to be broken down and biologically oxidized or converted to carbon dioxide. Likewise, nitrogenous dissolved solids (amino acids, ammonia, etc.) are also oxidized by the floc to nitrites, nitrates, and, in some processes, to nitrogen gas through denitrification.

Surface-Aerated Basins (Lagoons): Most biological oxidation processes for treating industrial wastewaters have in common the use of oxygen (or air) and microbial action. Surface-aerated basins achieve 80 to 90 percent removal of BOD with retention times of 1 to 10 days. The basins may range in depth from 1.5 to 5.0 metres and use motor-driven aerators floating on the surface of the wastewater.

In an aerated basin system, the aerators provide two functions: they transfer air into the basins required by the biological oxidation reactions, and they provide the mixing required for dispersing the air and for contacting the reactants (that is, oxygen, wastewater and microbes).

Typically, the floating surface aerators are rated to deliver the amount of air equivalent to 1.8 to 2.7 kg O₂/kW-h. However, they do not provide as good mixing as is normally achieved in activated sludge systems and therefore aerated basins do not achieve the same performance level as activated sludge units. Biological oxidation

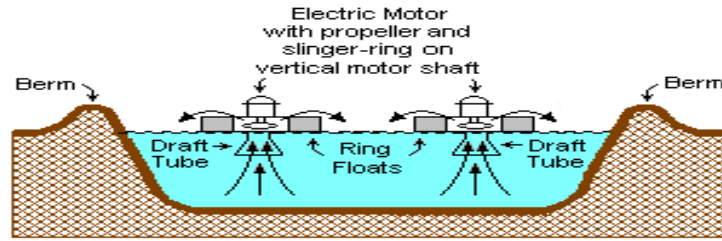
process are sensitive to temperature and between 0 °C and 40 °C, the rate of biological reactions increase with temperature. Most surface aerated vessels operate at between 4 °C and 32 °C.

Filter Beds (Oxidizing Beds): In older plants and those receiving variable loadings, trickling filter beds are used where the settled sewage liquor is spread onto the surface of a bed made up of coke (carbonized coal), limestone chips or specially fabricated plastic media. Such media must have large surface areas to support the biofilms that form.

The liquor is typically distributed through perforated spray arms. The distributed liquor trickles through the bed and is collected in drains at the base. These drains also provide a source of air which percolates up through the bed, keeping it aerobic. Biological films of bacteria, protozoa and fungi form on the media's surfaces and eat or otherwise reduce the organic content. This biofilm is often grazed by insect larvae, snails, and worms which help maintain an optimal thickness. Overloading of beds increases the thickness of the film leading to clogging of the filter media and ponding on the surface. Recent advances in media and process micro-biology design overcome many issues with trickling filter designs.

Biological Aerated Filters: Biological Aerated (or Anoxic) Filter (BAF) or Biofilters combine filtration with biological carbon reduction, nitrification or denitrification. BAF usually includes a reactor filled with a filter media. The media is either in suspension or supported by a gravel layer at the foot of the filter. The dual purpose of this media is to support highly active biomass that is attached to it and to filter suspended solids.

Carbon reduction and ammonia conversion occurs in aerobic mode and sometime achieved in a single reactor while nitrate conversion occurs in anoxic mode. BAF is operated either in upflow or downflow configuration depending on design specified by manufacturer.



A TYPICAL SURFACE – AERATED BASIN

Note: The ring floats are tethered to posts on the berms.

Figure 4: A Typical Surface-Aerated Basin (using motor-driven floating aerators).

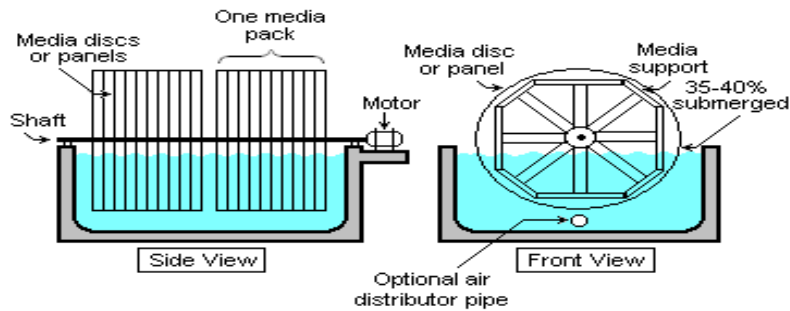


Figure 5: Schematic of a Typical Rotating Biological Contactor (RBC). The Treated Effluent Clarifier/Settler is not Included in the Diagram.

Secondary Sedimentation: The final step in the secondary treatment stage is to settle out the biological filter material through a secondary clarifier and to produce sewage water containing low levels of organic material and suspended matter.



Figure 6: Secondary sedimentation tank at a rural treatment plant.

TERTIARY TREATMENT

The purpose of tertiary treatment is to provide a final treatment stage to further improve the effluent quality before it is discharged to the receiving environment (sea, river, lake, wetlands, ground, etc.). More than one tertiary treatment process may be used at any treatment plant. If disinfection is practiced, it is always the final process. It is also called "effluent polishing."

Filtration

Sand filtration removes much of the residual suspended matter. Filtration over activated carbon, also called *carbon adsorption*, removes residual toxins.

Lagooning

Lagooning provides settlement and further biological improvement through storage in large man-made ponds or lagoons. These lagoons are highly aerobic and colonization by native macrophytes, especially reeds, is often encouraged. Small filter feeding invertebrates such as *Daphnia* and species of *Rotifera* greatly assist in treatment by removing fine particulates.

Nutrient Removal

Wastewater may contain high levels of the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus. Excessive release to the environment can lead to a buildup of nutrients, called eutrophication, which can in turn encourage the overgrowth of weeds, algae, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). This may cause an algal bloom, a rapid growth in the population of algae. The algae numbers are unsustainable and eventually most of them die. The decomposition of the algae by bacteria uses up so much of the oxygen in the water that most or all of the animals die, which creates more organic matter for the bacteria to decompose. In addition to causing deoxygenation, some algal species produce toxins that contaminate drinking water supplies. Different treatment processes are required to remove nitrogen and phosphorus.

Nitrogen Removal

The removal of nitrogen is effected through the biological oxidation of nitrogen from ammonia to nitrate (nitrification), followed by denitrification, the reduction of nitrate to nitrogen gas. Nitrogen gas is released to the atmosphere and thus removed from the water.

Nitrification itself is a two-step aerobic process, each step facilitated by a different type of bacteria. The oxidation of ammonia (NH_3) to nitrite (NO_2^-) is most often facilitated by *Nitrosomonas* spp. ("nitroso" referring to the formation of a nitroso functional group). Nitrite oxidation to nitrate (NO_3^-), though traditionally believed to be facilitated by *Nitrobacter* spp. (nitro referring the formation of anitro functional group), is now known to be facilitated in the environment almost exclusively by *Nitrospira* spp.

Sometimes the conversion of toxic ammonia to nitrate alone is referred to as tertiary treatment.

Many sewage treatment plants use centrifugal pumps to transfer the nitrified mixed liquor from the aeration zone to the anoxic zone for denitrification. These pumps are often referred to as *Internal Mixed Liquor Recycle* (IMLR) pumps. The bacteria *Brocadia anammoxidans*, is being researched for it's potential in sewage treatment. It can remove nitrogen from waste water. In addition the bacteria can perform the anaerobic oxidation of ammonium and can produce the rocket fuel hydrazine from waste water.

Phosphorus Removal

Each person excretes between 200 and 1000 grams of phosphorus annually. Studies of United States sewage in the late 1960s estimated mean per capita contributions of 500 grams in urine and feces, 1000 grams in synthetic detergents, and lesser variable amounts used as corrosion and scale control chemicals in water supplies. Source control via alternative detergent formulations has subsequently reduced the largest contribution, but the content of urine and feces will remain unchanged. Phosphorus removal is important as it is a limiting nutrient for algae growth in many fresh water systems. (For a description of the negative effects of algae, see Nutrient removal). It is also particularly important for water reuse systems where high phosphorus concentrations may lead to fouling of downstream equipment such as reverse osmosis.

Phosphorus can be removed biologically in a process called enhanced biological phosphorus removal. In this process, specific bacteria, called polyphosphate-accumulating organisms (PAOs), are selectively enriched and accumulate large quantities of phosphorus within their cells (up to 20 percent of their mass). When the biomass enriched in these bacteria is separated from the treated water, these biosolids have a high fertilizer value. Once removed, phosphorus, in the form of a phosphate-rich sludge, may be stored in a land fill or resold for use in fertilizer.

Disinfection

The purpose of disinfection in the treatment of waste water is to substantially reduce the number of microorganisms in the water to be discharged back into the environment for the later use of

drinking, bathing, irrigation, etc. The effectiveness of disinfection depends on the quality of the water being treated (e.g., cloudiness, pH, etc.), the type of disinfection being used, the disinfectant dosage (concentration and time), and other environmental variables. Cloudy water will be treated less successfully, since solid matter can shield organisms, especially from ultraviolet light or if contact times are low. Generally, short contact times, low doses and high flows all militate against effective disinfection. Common methods of disinfection include ozone, chlorine, ultraviolet light, or sodium hypochlorite. Chloramine, which is used for drinking water, is not used in the treatment of waste water because of its persistence. After multiple steps of disinfection, the treated water is ready to be released back into the water cycle by means of the nearest body of water or agriculture. Afterwards, the water can be transferred to reserves for everyday human uses.

Odor Control

Odors emitted by sewage treatment are typically an indication of an anaerobic or "septic" condition. Early stages of processing will tend to produce foul smelling gases, with hydrogen sulfide being most common in generating complaints. Large process plants in urban areas will often treat the odors with carbon reactors, a contact media with bio-slimes, small doses of chlorine, or circulating fluids to biologically capture and metabolize the noxious gases. Other methods of odor control exist, including addition of iron salts, hydrogen peroxide, calcium nitrate, etc. to manage hydrogen sulfide levels.

High-density solids pumps are suitable for reducing odors by conveying sludge through hermetic closed pipework.

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