

**INVESTIGATION OF ZINC REMOVAL CAPACITIES OF
DIFFERENT SORBENT MATERIALS TO BE USED IN
CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

W.A.U. WITHARANA



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**DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL ENGINEERING
UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA
SRI LANKA**

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of
Science**

Department of Civil Engineering

**University of Moratuwa
Sri Lanka**


December 2010

Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains neither materials previously published or written by another person, nor material, which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of an university or other institute of higher studies, except where an acknowledgement is made in the text.

W.A.U. Witharana

Date:

 This is to certify that this thesis submitted by W.A.U. Witharana is a record of candidate's own work carried out by her under our supervision. The matter embodied in this thesis is original and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree.

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Decayed is this body, a frail nest of diseases. This foul mass breaks up. Indeed, the life ends in death.
Lord Buddha, B.C. 563. Dhamma Padaya, Jara vaggo, verse 148.

Dedication

To



All teachers
who have profoundly changed
the our lives

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Abstract

There is an increasing demand for better water quality in order to safeguard public health, the social security and accomplish environmental integrity. It has been found over the past couple of years that health hazards associated with heavy metal have been on the rise, particularly the chronic health problems due to the ingestion or consumption of even low doses of heavy metal-rich waters. Accumulation of such metals is reported mainly due to non-treatment or poor treatment of industrial wastewaters. Lack of tertiary treatment may have attributed to this growing problem and hence the environmental pollution. Constructed wetlands have therefore received great attention in the recent past as a tertiary treatment method or a polishing technique due to low construction and operation costs, minimum maintenance and also as an environmental friendly system. However, finding a low-cost sorbent material which can be used as an alternative to activated carbon has been a problem for decades in wastewater treatment industry, especially in developing countries. Therefore, the present study focuses on the applicability of low-cost sorbent materials that can be used in constructed wetlands as a filter medium. The focus was on four sorbent materials: tile, brick, saw dust and rice husks, which were selected based on their local availability. Laboratory-scale experiments were performed to investigate their maximum adsorption capacity and removal efficiency with a synthetic Zinc solution. The Results revealed that tile material has the highest adsorption capacity (47.6 mg/g) and removal efficiency, (98%) while brick (37.0 mg/g, 86%), sawdust (20.4 mg/g, 80%) and rice husks (15.8 mg/g, 64%) have relatively low adsorption capacities and removal efficiencies, respectively. The percentage removal of Zinc by all the four sorbent materials increased with an increase of contact time. The kinetics of adsorption were relatively fast for all tested low-cost materials. The equilibrium data were correlated with both Langmuir and Freundlich isotherms. Adsorption isotherms are well described by Langmuir isotherms. The separation factor of equilibrium (R_L) indicates favourable isotherms ($0 < R_L < 1$) for all tested materials. Characterization of four sorbent materials was done by undertaking SEM, XRD and FTIR analyses. It can be concluded from the results that, the low-cost sorbent materials that were tested can be an attractive substitute for activated carbon in removing Zn from industrial wastewaters.

Keywords: adsorption isotherms, constructed wetlands, sorbent material, Zinc

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	i
Abstract	ii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Abbreviations and Acronyms	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem definition	2
1.3 Objectives	3
1.4 Scope and outline of the report	3
CHAPTER 2	5
2 Literature Review	5
2.1 Zinc	5
2.1.1 Zinc related industries	5
2.1.2 Biological role and Zinc toxicity	5
2.2 Constructed wetlands	6
2.2.1 Types of wetlands and their mechanism of removing pollutants	6
2.3 Sorbent material and their adsorption mechanism	10
2.3.1 Adsorption isotherms/kinetics	11
2.3.2 Characteristics of adsorbent which determine the adsorption	11
2.4 Low-cost sorbent materials	12
2.4.1 Uses of low-cost sorbent materials for remediation of wastewater	12
2.4.2 Uses of low-cost materials in remediation of industrial wastewaters	12
2.4.3 Sorbent materials used in constructed wetlands	17
2.4.4 Low cost sorbent materials used in constructed wetlands in remediation of wastewaters	17
CHAPTER 3	24
3 Materials and Methods	24
3.1 Adsorbent materials, instruments and equipment	24
3.2 Characterization of adsorbent materials	25
3.3 Batch adsorption experiments	25
3.4 Adsorption isotherms	26
3.4.1 Langmuir adsorption isotherms	26
3.4.2 Freundlich adsorption isotherm	27
3.5 Adsorption kinetics	27
3.6 Thermodynamics parameters	28
CHAPTER 4	30
4 Results and Discussion	30
4.1 Characterization of adsorbent materials	30
4.1.1 SEM analysis	30

4.1.2	XRD analysis	31
4.1.3	FTIR analysis	38
4.2	Equilibrium studies and removal efficiency	42
4.3	Isotherm Studies	44
4.4	Adsorption kinetics and thermodynamics parameter	47
CHAPTER 5	49
5	Conclusion	49
CHAPTER 6	51
6	Recommendations	51
References	52
Annexes	58



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List of Tables

Table 1: Uses of constructed wetlands for pollutants removal by different wastewater producing industries	8
Table 2: Industrial wastewaters (actual or synthetic) remediation by low cost material in laboratory scale	13
Table 3: Pilot and full scale investigations for filter/sorbent material wastewater remediation	19
Table 4: XRD analysis for clay tile	32
Table 5: XRD analysis for brick	34
Table 6: Summary of Characterization tests	42
Table 7: Langmuir and Freundlich isotherm constant for clay tile, brick, sawdust, rice husks and activated carbon in Zinc solution	44
Table 8: The comparison of maximum adsorption capacity between experimental values and Langmuir values	44
Table 9 : Adsorption kinetics for clay tile, brick, sawdust, rice husks and activated carbon	47
Table 10: Thermodynamic equilibrium constant (K_c) and Gibbs free energy (ΔG) at for adsorption of Zn (II) on different materials	47
Table 11: Summary of Experimental values	48
Table 12: Summary of all test parameters	49



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List of Figures

- Figure 1: SEM images at 1000× for a) clay tile, c) brick, e) sawdust and g) rice husk as a raw material before treatment with Zn (II) and SEM images at 1000× for b) clay tile, d) brick, f) sawdust and h) rice husk after the experiment being treated with synthetic Zn solution 31
- Figure 2: XRD graph for a) clay tile before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn (II) solution 33
- Figure 3: XRD graph for a) brick before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn (II) solution 35
- Figure 4: XRD graph for a) sawdust before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 36
- Figure 5: XRD graph for a) rice husks before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 37
- Figure 6: FTIR analysis for clay a) before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 38
- Figure 7: FTIR analysis for brick a) before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 39
- Figure 8: FTIR analysis for sawdust a) before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 40
- Figure 9: FTIR analysis for rice husks a) before treatment and b) after treatment with Zn 41
- Figure 10: The effect of contact time on amount adsorbed a) and removal efficiency b) (Initial concentration - 100 mg/l of Zn, particle size - 415 μm, dose - 1 g/100 ml, pH - 6.5) 43
- Figure 11: Langmuir Isotherms for a) activated carbon, b) brick, c) clay tile d) sawdust and e) rice husks at room temperature (28 ± 3 °C) 45
- Figure 12: Freundlich Isotherms for a) clay tile, b) sawdust, c) activated carbon d) brick and rice husks e) at room temperature (28 ± 3 °C). 46

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAS	Atomic Adsorption Spectrometer
BOD	Biological Oxygen Demand
BOI	Board of Investment of Sri Lanka
CAC	Commercially available Activated Carbon
CEA	Central Environmental Authority
CEC	Cation Exchange Capacity
CWs	Constructed Wetlands
FIAM	Free Ion Activity Model
FTIR	Fourier Transformation Infra-Red
FWS CWs	Free Water Surface Constructed Wetlands
FWS	Free Water Surface
HSSF	Horizontal Subsurface Flow
IAA	Indole Acetic Acid
IDB	Industrial Development Board
MoID	Ministry of Industrial Development
NEA	National Environment Act
N	Nitrogen
P	Phosphorus
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscope
SSHf CWs	Subsurface Horizontal Flow Constructed Wetlands
SSVF CWs	Sub-Surface Vertical Flow Constructed Wetlands
TOC	Total Organic Carbon
TON	Total Organic Nitrogen
TRP	Total Reactive Phosphorus
TSS	Total Suspended Solids
XRD	X-Ray Diffraction