

**LANDFILL LEACHATE TREATMENT PERFORMANCE IN SUBSURFACE FLOW
CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS USING SAFETY FLOW SYSTEM**

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*Dedicated to my dearest parents mak and abah,
sisters arni, aerin, atin and
my beloved aqem, aziq, abd*

*Thanks for your support, encouragement and
for really understand me.....*

aeslina



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ABSTRACT

The increasing application of constructed wetlands for leachate treatment is an ever-growing incentive for the development of better process design tools. This study was conducted to investigate leachate treatment performance of horizontal subsurface flow constructed wetlands (HSSFCW) installed with water dispersal system, called Safety Flow[®] to produce a defined subsurface wetting pattern along the line and length of the system. A pilot scale HSSFCW with three parallel reactors was set up with dimensions of 2.45 m length x 0.20 m width x 0.40 m depth. All reactors were dosed using pre-treatment leachate effluent from sanitary landfill, Johor Bahru. Out of the three reactors, Reactors A and C were planted with *Thypha angustifolia*, whilst Reactor B was not planted and used as a control. In addition, Reactor C was installed with water dispersal system. The performance of constructed wetlands system was evaluated from the effluent quality. The main parameters were organics matter (biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and chemical oxygen demand (COD), nutrients (ammonical nitrogen (NH₄-N), nitrate (NO₃-N), phosphorus (P), and heavy metals (chromium (Cr) and cadmium (Cd). Based on the observation, Reactor C was found better than both Reactors A and B. Reactor C had removed more than 70% of BOD and COD, up to 80% of NH₄-N and P and at least 90% of heavy metals.

ABSTRAK

Aplikasi penggunaan tanah bencah buatan yang semakin meningkat merupakan satu pencapaian yang baik kerana teknologi tanah bencah buatan memainkan peranan yang penting di dalam pengolahan air larut resap. Kajian ini dijalankan adalah bertujuan untuk mengkaji kebolehan sistem tanah bencah buatan jenis aliran sub-permukaan di dalam pengolahan air larut resap dengan penambahan sistem pengairan yang dinamakan Safety Flow[®]. Ia boleh menghasilkan corak pembasahan di permukaan dan di sepanjang sistem. Tiga buah unit (A, B dan C) tanah bencah buatan jenis horizontal aliran sub-permukaan berskala telah dibina dengan dimensi 2.45 m panjang x 0.20 m lebar x 0.40 m kedalamannya. Ketiga-tiga unit ini dialirkan dengan air larut resap yang telah menjalani pra-rawatan di tapak pelupusan sampah, Johor Bahru. Unit A dan C ditanam dengan *Thypha angustifolia* manakala unit B bertindak sebagai unit kawalan. Sebagai tambahan, unit C dilengkapi dengan sistem Safety Flow[®]. Kualiti efluen daripada setiap unit diuji untuk mengetahui unit yang memberikan rawatan air larut resap yang terbaik. Parameter yang diuji di dalam kajian ini ialah kandungan organik (keperluan oksigen biokimia dan keperluan oksigen kimia), kandungan nutrien (ammonia nitrogen, nitrat, dan fosforus) dan logam berat (kromium dan kadmium). Secara keseluruhannya, hasil kajian menunjukkan unit bencah buatan C (dilengkapi dengan Safety Flow[®]) memberikan rawatan yang lebih baik dalam pengolahan air larut resap berbanding unit bencah buatan A dan B. Unit C telah menyingkirkan lebih daripada 70% kandungan BOD dan COD, lebih daripada 80% kandungan NH₄-N dan P manakala kadar penyingkiran bagi logam berat pula adalah melebihi 90%.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	-	$d \cdot W$, cross-sectional area of wetland bed, perpendicular to the direction of flow, m^2
cm	-	centimeter
$^{\circ}C$	-	celcius
d	-	depth of wetlands media, m
hr/h	-	hour
k	-	hydraulic conductivity of the medium, $m^3/m^2 \cdot d$
$^{\circ}K$	-	Kelvin
L	-	length of wetlands media, m
L	-	liter
m	-	meter
MHz	-	MegaHertz
mg	-	milligram
ml	-	mililiter
mm	-	millimeter
μg	-	microgram
n	-	porosity of media, $n = V_v/V$ where (V_v and V are volume of voids and total volume).
Q	-	average flow rate through the system, m^3/d
S	-	slope of the bed, or hydraulic gradient (as a fraction or decimal)
t	-	hydraulic retention time
W	-	width of wetlands media, m

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ag	-	Argentum
Al	-	Aluminium
APHA	-	American Public Health Association
Ba	-	Barium
BOD	-	Biological Oxygen Demand
BOD ₅	-	5-day Biochemical Oxygen Demand
Ca	-	Calcium
CaCO ₃	-	Calcium Carbonat
Cd	-	Cadmium
COD	-	Chemical Oxygen Demand
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
Cr	-	Chromium
Cu	-	Cuprum
EPA	-	<i>Environmental Protection Agency</i>
Fe	-	Iron
H ₂	-	Hydrogen
HF	-	Horizontal Flow
Hg	-	Mercury
HSSFCW	-	Horizontal Subsurface Flow Constructed Wetlands
ICP	-	Inductively Coupled Plasma
IWA	-	International Water Association
MBAS	-	Methylene Blue Active Substances
Mn	-	Manganese

N ₂	-	Nitrogen
NH ₄ -N	-	Ammonical Nitrogen
Ni	-	Nikel
NO ₃ -N	-	Nitrate
P	-	Phosphorus
Pb	-	Plumbum
SF	-	Surface Flow
SS	-	Suspended solids
SSF	-	Subsurface Flow
TDS	-	Total Dissolved Solids
TOC	-	Total Organic Carbon
VDS	-	Volatile dissolved solids
VF	-	Vertical Flow
VSS	-	Volatile suspended solids
Zn	-	Zink



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Prior to modern developments in sanitary engineering, people disposed off wastewater to natural aquatic ecosystems, including natural wetlands (Kadlec and Knight, 1996). However, natural wetlands are important resources in natural ecology and are legitimately protected in most countries. Wetlands are among the most important links in the natural ecosystem. The major functions of wetlands, include holding and recycling nutrients, providing wildlife habitats, stabilizing shorelands, controlling and buffering natural floods, recharging ground water, providing treatment for pollutants and so on (Hughes *et al.*, 1992). Constructed wetlands provide an effective method for treating wastewater by simulating the processes that occur in natural wetlands. Such artificial ecological system has also been found to be useful in improving the quality of river water (Kadlec and Hey, 1994 and Jing *et al.*, 2001).

Constructed wetlands are now used to improve the quality of point or nonpoint sources of water pollution including stormwater runoff, domestic wastewater, agricultural wastewater and coal mine drainage. It is also being used to treat petroleum refinery wastes, compost and landfill leachates, fishpond discharges and pretreated industrial wastewaters (Moshiri, 1993).

Constructed wetlands systems are characterized by the advantages of moderate capital cost, low energy consumption and maintenance requirements and benefits of increased wildlife habitat (International Water Association (IWA), 2000). As a result of both extensive research and practical application, insight is being gained into the design performance, operation and maintenance of constructed wetlands for water quality improvement. Constructed wetlands can be sturdy and effective systems. However, to be effective, they must be carefully designed, constructed, operated and maintained (Moshiri, 1993).

Putrajaya wetlands is another milestone in the development of Malaysia as an independent and sovereign nation. Putrajaya wetlands trace the development of Malaysia's first constructed wetlands and it is built to demonstrate the benefits of incorporating this unique ecosystem in urban areas. It is also a tribute to the nation's commitment and government interest to sustainable development, by selecting the environmental-friendly solution of constructing wetlands to treat catchment water before it enters Putrajaya Lake.

Constructed wetlands can be used to treat leachate from sanitary landfills (Rash and Lier, 1999). In this study, a new water dispersal system called Safety Flow[®] was used in designing horizontal subsurface flow constructed wetlands to see its performance in treating landfill leachate.

1.2 Problem Statement

Landfilling represents the least desirable means of dealing with society's wastes involving the controlled disposal of wastes on or in the earth's mantle, and it is by far the most common method of ultimate disposal for waste generated. The major environmental concern associated with landfills is related to discharge of leachate into the environment and the current landfill technology is primarily determined by the need to prevent and control leachate problems. Landfill leachate management has been given significant attention in recent years (Ding *et al.*, 2001).

Currently, a number of options exist for the containment and treatment of this type of wastewater. Constructed wetlands as tool in the treatment of polluted water is increasing in popularity as an ecological engineering alternative to conventional, chemical based methods. Wetlands ecosystems have the advantages of being self-perpetuating, aesthetically pleasing, low-maintenance and cost-effective treatment system. Constructed wetlands have been investigated and found to be capable of removing organics matter, nutrients, heavy metals and other pollutants simultaneously (Lim *et al.*, 2003). In these facilities, high levels of pollutant removal are due to a good combination of chemical, biological and physical processes (Brix, 1997).

Generally, constructed wetlands can be divided into two categories, which are surface flow constructed wetlands and subsurface flow constructed wetlands. Subsurface flow systems are more effective than surface flow systems at removing pollutants at high application rates. Though, subsurface irrigation always has the problem of tunneling where the soil moisture uptake rate cannot keep to the water applied. This leads to water draining up and down, causing pooling at the surface and rapid release to the water table. With all the subsurface systems to date, the water-releasing rate is faster than the soil and plant uptake. In this study, Safety Flow[®] system

has been introduced to overcome these problems. Safety Flow® was initially applied for subsurface irrigation system, which requires precision irrigation, and provides more benefits especially in managing gravitational water loss, saline soil conditions, and root zone wetting pattern, evaporative losses and plant requirements and minimizing water losses. With all the features and advantages of Safety Flow®, it was applied in this study to enhance the removal efficiency of constructed wetlands for leachate treatment.

1.3 Overview of Constructed Wetlands with Safety Flow® System

Over 1000 treatment wetlands systems are in operation worldwide (Kadlec and Hey, 1994), encompassing a wide variety of designs and objectives. Constructed wetlands designs include horizontal surface and subsurface flow, vertical flow and floating raft systems. More than 95% of constructed wetlands in Europe are subsurface flow wetlands (Platzer, 2000). In horizontal subsurface flow wetlands, wastewater flows horizontally through the substrate, which is composed of soil, sand, rock or artificial media. The purification process occurs during contact with the surface of the media and plant rhizospheres. In this study, the focus was on the performance of horizontal subsurface flow constructed wetlands installed with Safety Flow® system for landfill leachate treatment. There are two types of Safety Flow® configurations, Safety Flow® Flat and Safety Flow® Wrap. Safety Flow® Flat is suitable for this study because it is great for areas where the slope is less than three percent. Safety Flow® is a subsurface system that uses geotextile to spread the water in both horizontal and lateral wetting pattern. It also uses an impermeable layer of polyethylene to minimize the movement of water downwards by gravity allowing the soil to make full use of the water in capillary action. This system has a drip tape delivering the water to the geotextile, and the base polyethylene layer, at a consistent and predetermined rate. The flow rates and emitter

spacing can be adjusted to soil conditions and length of run. It also creates an elliptical wetting pattern along the whole length of the material.

Safety Flow[®] is unique and different from other subsurface systems because it can produce a defined subsurface wetting pattern along the line and length of the system. The combination of drip tape technology; permeable membranes provides thousands of emission points along the system making water available to the soil capillaries to take up the water at the soil absorption rate while impermeable layer is to minimize the movement of water downwards by gravity.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The main aim and objectives of this study were to evaluate the applications of Safety Flow[®] system in horizontal subsurface flow constructed wetlands (HSSFCW) planted with *Typha Angustifolia* in treating landfill leachate. The performance of HSSFCW planted with *T. angustifolia* would increase with the installation of Safety Flow[®] system in landfill leachate treatment. To achieve this aim, the study was carried out with the following objectives;

- i) To evaluate the performance of Safety Flow[®] system in HSSFCW for landfill leachate treatment.
- ii) To determine the capability of the HSSFCW for removal of organics (biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and chemical oxygen demand (COD),

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