

CHAPTER 9

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PONDS AND AERATED LAGOONS

9.1 General

This chapter describes the requirements for the following biological treatment processes:

- a. Stabilization ponds
- b. Aerated lagoons

Additionally, this chapter describes the requirements for use of hydraulic control release lagoons for effluent disposal.

A guide to provisions for lagoon design is the EPA publication Design Manual - Municipal Wastewater Stabilization Ponds, EPA-625/1-83-015.

9.1.1 Applicability

In general, ponds and aerated lagoons are most applicable to small and/or rural communities where land is available at low cost and minimum secondary treatment requirements are acceptable. Advantages include potentially lower capital costs, simple operation, and low O&M costs.

9.1.2 Supplement to Engineering Report

The engineering report shall contain pertinent information on location, geology, soil conditions, area for expansion, and any other factors that will affect the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed treatment system.

The following information should be submitted in addition to that required in the Chapter 1 section titled "Engineering Report and Preliminary Plans":

- a. The location and direction of all residences, commercial development, and water supplies within 1/2 mile of the proposed pond
- b. Results of the geotechnical investigation performed at the site
- c. Data demonstrating anticipated seepage rates of the proposed pond bottom at the maximum water surface elevation
- d. A description, including maps showing elevations and contours, of the site and adjacent area suitable for expansion
- e. The ability to disinfect the discharge is required.

9.1.3 Effluent Requirements

See Chapter 1, Section 1.1.

9.2 Design Loadings

9.2.1 Stabilization Ponds

Stabilization ponds are facultative and are not artificially mixed or aerated. Mixing and aeration are provided by natural processes. Oxygen is supplied mainly by algae.

Design loading shall not exceed 30 pounds BOD per acre per day on a total pond area basis and 50 pounds BOD per acre per day to any single pond (from Middlebrooks).

9.2.2 Aerated Lagoons

An aerated lagoon may be a complete-mix lagoon or a partial-mix aerated lagoon. Complete-mix lagoons provide enough aeration or mixing to maintain solids in suspension. Power levels are normally between 20 and 40 horsepower per million gallons. The partial-mix aerated lagoon is designed to permit accumulation of settleable solids on the lagoon bottom, where they decompose anaerobically. The power level is normally 4 to 10 horsepower per million gallons of volume.

BOD removal efficiencies normally vary from 80 to 90 percent, depending on detention time and provisions for suspended solids removal.

The aerated lagoon system design for minimum detention time may be estimated by using the following formula; however, for the development of final parameters, it is recommended that actual experimental data be developed.

$$\frac{S_e}{S_o} = \frac{1}{1 + 2.3K_1 t}$$

where:

t = detention time, days

K₁ = reaction coefficient, complete system per day, base 10

For complete treatment of normal domestic sewage, the K₁ value will be assumed to be:

$$K_1 = 1.087 \text{ @ } 20^\circ\text{C for complete mix}$$

$$K_1 = 0.12 \text{ @ } 20^\circ\text{C for partial mix}$$

$$S_e = \text{effluent BOD}_5, \text{ mg/l}$$

$$S_o = \text{influent BOD}_5, \text{ mg/l}$$

The reaction rate coefficient for domestic sewage that includes significant quantities of industrial wastes, other wastes, and partially treated sewage should be determined experimentally for various conditions that might be encountered in the aerated ponds. Conversion of the reaction rate coefficient to temperatures other than 20 degrees C should be according to the following formula:

$$K_1 = K_{20} 1.036^{(T-20)} \quad (T = \text{temperature in degrees C})$$

The minimum equilibrium temperature of the lagoon should be used for design of the aerated lagoon. The minimum equilibrium temperature should be estimated by using heat balance equations, which should include factors for influent wastewater temperature, ambient air temperature, lagoon surface area, and heat transfer effects of aeration, wind, and humidity. The minimum 30-day average ambient air temperature obtained from climatological data should be used for design.

Additional storage volume shall be considered for sludge storage and partial mix in aerated lagoons.

Sludge processing and disposal should be considered.

9.3 Special Details

9.3.1 General

9.3.1.1 Location

a. Distance from Habitation

A pond site should be located as far as practicable from habitation or any area that may be built up within a reasonable future period, taking into consideration site specifics such as topography, prevailing winds, and forests. Buffer zones between the lagoon and residences or similar land use should be at least 300 feet to residential property lines, and 1000 feet to existing residence structures.

b. Prevailing Winds

If practical, ponds should be located so that local prevailing winds will be in the direction of uninhabited areas. Preference should be given to sites that will permit an unobstructed wind sweep across the length of the ponds in the direction of the local prevailing winds.

c. Surface Runoff

Location of ponds in watersheds receiving significant amounts of runoff water is discouraged unless adequate provisions are made to divert storm water around the ponds and protect pond embankments from erosion.

d. Water Table

The effect of the ground water location on pond performance and construction must be considered.

e. Ground Water Protection

Ground Water Protection's main emphasis should be on site selection and liner construction, utilizing mainly compacted clay. Proximity of ponds to water supplies and other facilities subject to contamination and location in areas of porous soils and fissured rock formations should be critically evaluated to avoid creation of health hazards or other undesirable conditions. The possibility of chemical pollution may merit appropriate consideration. Test wells to monitor potential ground water pollution may be required and should be designed with proper consideration to water movement through the soil as appropriate.

An approved system of ground water monitoring wells or lysimeters may be required around the perimeter of the pond site to facilitate ground water monitoring. The use of wells and/or lysimeters will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on proximity of water supply and maximum ground water levels. This determination will be at the site approval phase (see Section 1.1).

A routine ground water sampling program shall be initiated prior to and during the pond operation, if required.

f. Floodwaters

Pond sites shall not be constructed in areas subject to 25-year flooding, or the ponds and other facilities shall be protected by dikes from the 25-year flood.

9.3.1.2 Pond Shape

The shape of all cells should be such that there are no narrow or elongated portions. Round, square, or rectangular ponds should have a length to width ratio near 1:1 for complete mix ponds. Rectangular ponds with a length not exceeding three times the width are considered most desirable for complete mix aerated lagoons. However, stabilization ponds should be rectangular with a length exceeding three times the width, or be baffled to ensure full utilization of the basin. No islands, peninsulas, or coves are permitted. Dikes should be rounded at corners to minimize accumulations of floating materials. Common dike construction should be considered whenever possible to minimize the length of exterior dikes.

9.3.1.3 Recirculation

Recirculation of lagoon effluent may be considered. Recirculation systems should be designed for 0.5 to 2.0 times the average influent wastewater flow and include flow measurement and control.

9.3.1.4 Flow Measurement

The design shall include provisions to measure, total, and record the wastewater flows.

9.3.1.5 Level Gauges

Pond level gauges should be located on outfall structures or be attached to stationary structures for each pond.

9.3.1.6 Pond Dewatering

All ponds shall have emergency drawdown piping to allow complete draining for maintenance.

Sufficient pumps and appurtenances should be available to facilitate draining of individual ponds in cases where multiple pond systems are constructed at the same elevation or for use if recirculation is desired.

9.3.1.7 Control Building

A control building for laboratory and maintenance equipment should be provided.

9.3.1.8 General Site Requirements

The pond area shall be enclosed with an adequate fence to keep out livestock and discourage trespassing, and be located so that travel along the top of the dike by maintenance vehicles is not obstructed. A vehicle access gate of width sufficient to accommodate mowing equipment and maintenance vehicles should be provided. All access gates shall be provided with locks. Cyclone-type fences, 5 to 6 feet high with 3 strands of barbed wire, are desirable, with appropriate warning signs required.

9.3.1.9 Provision for Sludge Accumulation

Influent solids, bacteria, and algae that settle out in the lagoons will not completely decompose and a sludge blanket will form. This can be a problem if the design does not include provisions for removal and disposal of accumulated sludge, particularly in the cases of anaerobic stabilization ponds and aerated lagoons. The design should include an estimate of the rate of sludge accumulation, frequency of sludge removal, methods of sludge removal, and ultimate sludge handling and disposal. Abandoning and capping of the lagoon is an acceptable solution (Re: The Division of Solid Waste Management guidelines for abandonment of a lagoon). However, the design life shall be stated in the report.

9.3.2 Stabilization Ponds

9.3.2.1 Depth

The primary (first in a series) pond depth should not exceed 6 feet. Greater depths will be considered for polishing ponds and the last ponds in a series of 4 or more.

9.3.2.2 Influent Structures and Pipelines

a. Manholes

A manhole should be installed at the terminus of the interceptor line or the force main and should be located as close to the dike as topography permits; its invert should be at least 6 inches above the maximum operating level of the pond to provide sufficient hydraulic head without surcharging the manhole.

b. Influent Pipelines

The influent pipeline can be placed at zero grade. The use of an exposed dike to carry the influent pipeline to the discharge points is prohibited, as such a structure will impede circulation.

c. Inlets

Influent and effluent piping should be located to minimize short-circuiting and stagnation within the pond and maximize use of the entire pond area.

Multiple inlet discharge points shall be used for primary cells larger than 10 acres.

All gravity lines should discharge horizontally onto discharge aprons. Force mains should discharge vertically up and shall be submerged at least 2 feet when operating at the 3-foot depth.

d. Discharge Apron

Provision should be made to prevent erosion at the point of discharge to the pond.

9.3.2.3 Interconnecting Piping and Outlet Structures

Interconnecting piping for pond installations shall be valved or provided with other arrangements to regulate flow between structures and permit variable depth control.

The outlet structure can be placed on the horizontal pond floor adjacent to the inner toe of the dike embankment. A permanent walkway from the top of the dike to the top of the outlet structure is required for access.

The outlet structure should consist of a well or box equipped with multiple-valved pond drawoff lines. An adjustable drawoff device is also acceptable. The outlet structure should be designed so that the liquid level of the pond can be varied from a 3.0- 5.0 foot depth in increments of 0.5 foot or less. Withdrawal points shall be spaced so that effluent can be withdrawn from depths of 0.75 foot to 2.0 feet below pond water surface, irrespective of the pond depth.

The lowest drawoff lines should be 12 inches off the bottom to control eroding velocities and avoid pickup of bottom deposits. The overflow from the pond shall be taken near but below the water surface. A two-foot deep baffle may be helpful to keep algae from the effluent. The structure should also have provisions for draining the pond.

A locking device should be provided to prevent unauthorized access to level control facilities. An unvalved overflow placed 6 inches above the maximum water level shall be provided.

Outlets should be located nearest the prevailing winds to allow floating solids to be blown away from effluent weirs.

The pond overflow pipes shall be sized for the peak design flow to prevent overtopping of the dikes.

9.3.2.4 Minimum and Maximum Pond Size

No pond should be constructed with less than 1/2 acre or more than 40 acres of surface area.

9.3.2.5 Number of Ponds

A minimum of three ponds, and preferably four ponds, in series should be provided (or baffling provided for a single cell lagoon design configuration) to insure good hydraulic design. The objective in the design is to eliminate short circuiting.

9.3.2.6 Parallel/Series Operation

Designs, other than single ponds with baffling, should provide for operation of ponds in parallel or series. Hydraulic design should allow for equal distribution of flows to all ponds in either mode of operation.

9.3.3 Aerated Lagoons

9.3.3.1 Depth

Depth should be based on the type of aeration equipment used, heat loss considerations, and cost, but should be no less than 7 feet. In choosing a depth, aerator erosion protection and allowances for ice cover and solids accumulation should be considered.

9.3.3.2 Influent Structures and Pipelines

The same requirements apply as described for facultative systems, except that the discharge locations should be coordinated with the aeration equipment design.

9.3.3.3 Interconnecting Piping and Outlet Structures

a. Interconnecting Piping

The same requirements apply as described for facultative systems.

b. Outlet Structure

The same requirements apply as described for facultative systems, except for variable depth requirements and arrangement of the outlet to withdraw effluent from a point at or near the surface. The outlet shall be preceded by an underflow baffle.

9.3.3.4 Number of Ponds

Not less than three basins should be used to provide the detention time and volume required. The basins should be arranged for both parallel and series operation. A settling pond with a hydraulic detention time of 2 days at average design flow must follow the aerated cells, or an equivalent of the final aerated cell must be free of turbulence to allow settling of suspended solids.

9.3.3.5 Aeration Equipment

A minimum of two mechanical aerators or blowers shall be used to provide the horsepower required. At least three anchor points should be provided for each aerator. Access to aerators should be provided for routine maintenance which does not affect mixing in the lagoon. Timers will be required.

9.4 Pond Construction Details

9.4.1 Liners

9.4.1.1 Requirement for Lining

The seepage rate through the lagoon bottom and dikes shall not be greater than a water surface drop of 1/4 inch per day. (Note: The seepage rate of 1/4 inch per day is 7.3×10^{-6} cm/sec coefficient of permeability seepage rate under pond conditions.) If the native soil cannot be compacted or modified to meet this requirement, a pond liner system will be required.

If a lagoon is proposed to be upgraded, it must be shown that it currently meets the 1/4-inch per day seepage rate before approval will be given.

9.4.1.2 General

Pond liner systems that should be evaluated and considered include (1) earth liners, including native soil or local soils mixed with commercially prepared bentonite or comparable chemical sealing compound, and (2) synthetic membrane liners.

The liner should not be subject to deterioration in the presence of the wastewater. The geotechnical recommendations should be carefully considered during pond liner design.

Consideration should also be given to construct test wells when required by the Department in any future regulations, or when industrial waste is involved.

9.4.1.3 Soil Liners

The thickness and the permeability of the soil liners shall be sufficient to limit the leakage to the maximum allowable rate of 1/4 inch per day. The evaluation of earth for use as a soil liner should include laboratory permeability tests of the material and laboratory compaction tests. The analysis should take into consideration the expected permeability of the soil when compacted in the field. All of the soil liner material shall have essentially the same properties.

The analysis of an earth liner should also include evaluation of the earth liner material with regard to filter design criteria. This is required so that the fine-grained liner material does not infiltrate into a coarser subgrade material and thus reduce the effective thickness of the liner.

If the ponds are going to remain empty for any period of time, consideration should be given to the possible effects on the soil liners from freezing and thawing during cold weather or cracking from hot, dry weather. Freezing and thawing will generally loosen the soil for some depth. This depth is dependent on the depth of frost penetration.

The compaction requirements for the liner should produce a density equal to or greater than the density at which the permeability tests were made. The minimum liner thickness should be 12 inches, to ensure proper mixing of bentonite with the native soil. The soil should be placed in lifts no more than 6 inches in compacted thickness. The moisture content at which the soil is placed should be at or slightly above the optimum moisture content.

Construction and placement of the soil liner should be inspected by a qualified inspector. The inspector should keep records on the uniformity of the earth liner material, moisture contents, and the densities obtained.

Bentonite and other similar liners should be considered as a form of earth liner. Their seepage characteristics should be analyzed as previously

mentioned, and laboratory testing should be performed using the mixture of the native or local soil and bentonite or similar compound.

In general, the requirements for bentonite or similar compounds should include the following: (1) The bentonite or similar compound should be high swelling and free flowing and have a particle size distribution favorable for uniform application and minimizing of wind drift; (2) the application rate should be least 125 percent of the minimum rate found to be adequate in laboratory tests; (3) application rates recommended by a supplier should be confirmed by an independent laboratory; and (4) the mixtures of soil and bentonite or similar compound should be compacted at a water content greater than the optimum moisture content.

9.4.1.4 Synthetic Membrane Liners

Requirements for the thickness of synthetic liners may vary due to the liner material, but it is generally recommended that the liner thickness be no less than 20 mils; that is, 0.020 inch. There may be special conditions when reinforced membranes should be considered. These are usually considered where extra tensile strength is required. The membrane liner material should be compatible with the wastewater in the ponds such that no damage results to the liner. PVC liners should not be used where they will be exposed directly to sunlight. The preparation of the subgrade for a membrane liner is important. The subgrade should be graded and compacted so that there are no holes or exposed angular rocks or pieces of wood or debris. If the subgrade is very gravelly and contains angular rocks that could possibly damage the liner, a minimum bedding of 3 inches of sand should be provided directly beneath the liner. The liner should be covered with 12 inches of soil. This includes the side slope as well. No equipment should be allowed to operate directly on the liner. Consideration should be given to specifying that the manufacturer's representative be on the job supervising the installation during all aspects of the liner placement. An inspector should be on the job to monitor and inspect the installation.

Leakage must not exceed 1/4-inch per day.

9.4.1.5 Other Liners

Other liners that have been successfully used are soil cement, gunite, and asphalt concrete.

The performance of these liners is highly dependent on the experience and skill of the designer. Close review of the design of these types of liners is recommended.

9.4.2 Pond Construction

9.4.2.1 General

Ponds are often constructed of either a built-up dike or embankment section constructed on the existing grade, or they are constructed using a cut and fill technique. Dikes and embankments shall be designed using the generally accepted procedures for the design of small earth dams. The design should attempt to make use of locally available materials for the construction of dikes. Consideration should also be given to slope stability and seepage through and beneath the embankment and along pipes.

9.4.2.2 Top Width

The minimum recommended dike top width should be 12 feet on tangents and 15 feet on curves to permit access of maintenance vehicles. The minimum inside radius of curves of the corners of the pond should be 35 feet.

9.4.2.3 Side Slopes

Normally, inside slopes of either dikes or cut sections should not be steeper than 3 horizontal to 1 vertical. Outer slopes should not be steeper than 2 horizontal to 1 vertical. However, in many instances, the types of material used, maintenance considerations, and seepage conditions can indicate that other slopes should be used.

9.4.2.4 Freeboard

There should be sufficient freeboard to prevent overtopping of the dike from wave action and strong winds. A minimum of one foot is required.

9.4.2.5 Erosion Control

Erosion control should be considered for the inside slopes of the dike to prevent the formation of wavecut beaches in the dike slope. In the event that earth liners or membrane liners with earth cover are used, consideration should be given to erosion protection directly beneath aeration units. If the currents are strong enough, considering the type of material used for the earth cover, erosion pads may be necessary beneath the aeration units. Erosion control should also be considered wherever influent pipes empty into the pond.

If a grass cover for the outer slopes is desired, they should be fertilized and seeded to establish a good growth of vegetative cover. This vegetative cover will help control erosion from runoff. Consideration should also be given to protection of the outer slopes in the event that flooding occurs. The erosion protection should be able to withstand the currents from a flood.

9.4.3 Prefilling

The need to prefill ponds in order to determine the leakage rate shall be determined by the Department and incorporated into the plans and specifications. The strongest consideration for prefilling ponds will be given to ponds with earth liners. Ponds in areas where the surrounding homes are on wells will also be given strong consideration for prefilling.

9.4.4 Utilities and Structures Within Dike Sections

Pipes that extend through an embankment should be bedded up to the springline with concrete. Backfill should be with relatively impermeable material. No granular bedding material should be used. Cutoff collars should be used as required. No gravel or granular base should be used under or around any structures placed in the embankment within the pond. Embankments should be constructed at least 2 feet above the top of the pipe before excavating the pipe trench.

9.5 Hydrograph Controlled Release (HCR) Lagoons

All lagoons requirements apply to HCR lagoons with the following additional concerns:

HCR lagoons control the discharge of treated wastewater in accordance with the stream's assimilative capacity. Detention times vary widely and must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

HCR sites require much receiving stream flow pattern characterization. For this purpose, EPA Region IV has developed a computer design program. The Division of Water Pollution Control can assist in sizing the HCR basin using this program. HCR sites may be more economical if the design is combined with summertime land application. Their design is more economical if summer/winter or monthly standards are available.

The design and construction of the in-stream flow measurement equipment are critical components of an HCR system. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) should be contacted during the design phase. The USGS also has considerable construction experience concerning in-stream monitoring stations, although construction need not necessarily be done or supervised by the USGS.

9.6 Polishing Lagoons

Polishing lagoons following activated sludge are not permissible in Tennessee due to the one-cell algae interference.

9.7 Operability

Once a pond is designed, little operation should be required. However, to avoid NPDES permit violations, pond flexibility is needed. Operation flexibility is best facilitated by the addition of piping and valves to each pond which allows isolation of its volume during an algal bloom.

9.8 Upgrading Existing Systems

There are approximately sixty existing lagoons in Tennessee which were built utilizing standards and criteria from the 1960 period. Most are single- or double-cell units which need upgrading. Many are required to meet tertiary standards. The upgrade case should, in general, utilize the guidance in this chapter or proven configurations. It is noted, however, that there are many lagoon combinations available, such as complete-mix pond, partial-mix pond, stabilization pond, HCR pond and marsh-pond (wetlands) concepts. The combination of these alternatives should be based upon the effluent permit design standards as well as site economics.