DYTEC ENVIRONMENTAL

THE ORIGINAL VACUUM SLUDGE DEWATERING BED SYSTEM

The (VSDB) **V**acuum **S**ludge **D**ewatering **B**ed uses a simple, efficient and cost-effective technology. It has become the system of choice for many sludge dewatering applications throughout the world. It accomplishes rapid dewatering of most types of municipal waste and water treatment sludges, as well as a variety of industrial sludges.

The Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Bed system combines the overall simplicity of conventional sand beds with the faster handling of sludges associated with mechanical systems. For most sludges, the result can be a liftable cake suitable for handling within 24 hours.

System incorporates versatile and efficient operation, low labor and maintenance costs, low energy costs, low chemical costs, and overall cost.

Versatile and Efficient Operation

At design operating conditions, the system reliably provides a dewatered sludge cake of predictable dry solids content. When operated above normal design, the system still provides a liftable cake.

Low Labor and Maintenance Costs

The system has few moving parts. The reliable controls are familiar to most operators. Operating and maintenance costs are less than those of conventional drying beds. Because of the simplicity of the system, it may be operated and maintained by non technical personnel.

The cake can be removed manually or by front end loader . The rugged, abrasion-resistant media plates will withstand mechanical cake removal, providing years of trouble-free service. The durable media plates require essentially no maintenance. The VSDB filter is specifically designed for easy maintenance.

Low Energy Costs

For many systems, the maximum energy required is that necessary to run a 1.5 HP vacuum pump.

Low Chemical Costs

The VSDB is furnished with a polymer feed system and normally uses less polymer than any mechanical dewatering systems, resulting in substantial savings.

Low Total Costs

The VSDB normally proves to be the most cost-effective dewatering device in the marketplace today. Using EPA guidelines for a 20 year present worth cost comparisons, the VSDB is typically less expensive than the cost of mechanical dewatering. Other portions of the plant may be less expensive with a VSDB system. The filtrate from the system is low in solids and BOD, eliminating the need for extra treatment capacity to cope with recycled solids.

Experience

Over 20 years experience in sludge dewatering on WTP residuals, bio-solids and industrial slurries with a operating surface, epoxy bonded rock filter media. Over 200 vacuum beds in operation in 34 states and overseas.

Reliability

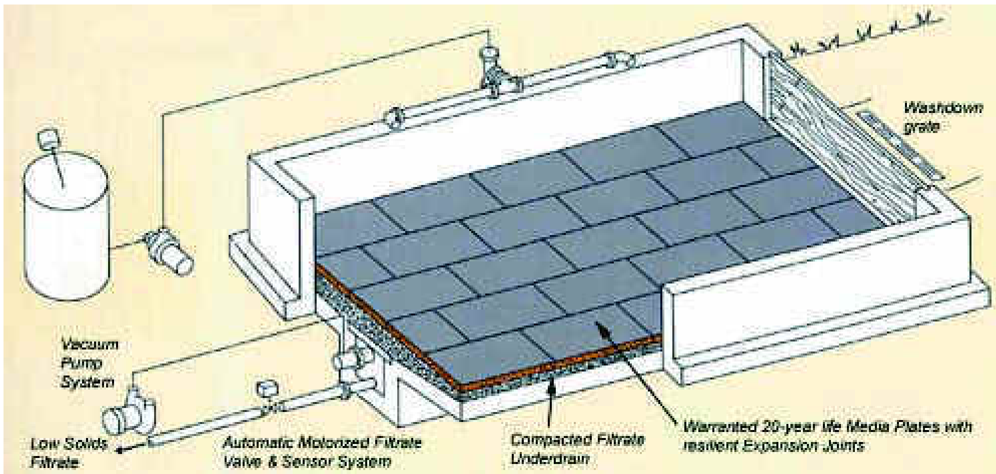
All VSDB mechanical and electrical systems use standard parts so replacement is days instead of weeks.

Flexibility

The size of the beds are tailored to each of the installations. We presently have installations as small as 6 ft x 12 ft ranging up to beds 16ft x 124 ft, handling up to 20,000 lbs of solids per application. In addition, the VSDB's provide cross-over capabilities that result in minimum down time.

Compatibility

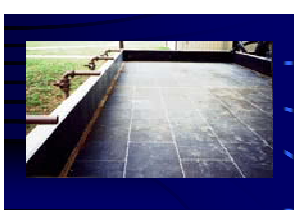
Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Beds have successfully been retrofitted in existing sand beds, buildings or within unusual land constraints. When supplemental processing of sludge is required, the VSDB has been used in conjunction with composting – pre-coat – heating – bed enclosures – solar.

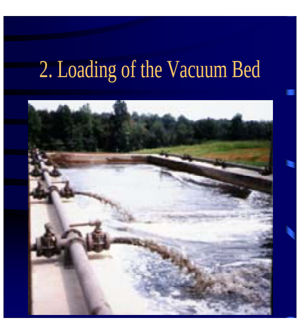


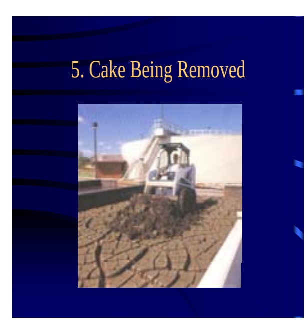
The VSDB has successfully been used for industrial agricultural and municipal wastewater sludges such as:

- Aerobically Digested (W.A.S.)
- Aerobically Digested
- Ferric Sludge (Dewatering and Recovery)
- Alum (Dewatering and Recovery)
- Lime
- Primary
- Oxidation Ditch (Undigested)
- Livestock Waste
- Food Processing Industry
- Paper Industry
- Utilities
- Mining Industry
- Chemical Industry

View of a Typical Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Bed







Dytec Environmental uses only high quality, long lasting components. Over 96% of the original equipment is installed in operation with quick mechanical and electrical systems use standard parts turnover .

When supplemental processing of sludge is required, the VSDB has been used in conjunction with **COMPOSTING-PRE-COAT- HEATING-BED ENCLOSURES-SOLAR.**

Disadvantages of the Gravity Sludge Drying Bed	Disadvantages of Conventional Sand Beds or Lagoons
• Requires 3-4 days between operating cycles • Requires larger area (move space) to process solids load • Typically only produces 8-10% solids • TLC required by loader operator not to damage plates • Periodic removal of plates necessary to clean solids buildup	• Climate dependent • Large land area required • Cake removal is labor intensive • Loss of sand during cake removal • Sand becomes compacted and plugged • Undesirable public appearance and odor • Only cost effective for very small plants

Advantages of the Vacuum Dewatering Bed System (VDBS)	Sludge Dewatering Techniques
• Capable of dewatering solids to at least the paint filter test requirement • Complete cycle typically takes less than 24 hours • More efficient, uses land less space • Few moving parts, low maintenance • Overall lower operating costs	• Centrifuge (greater than 5,000 mgd) • Rotary Drum Vacuum Filter • Belt Filter Press (greater than 5,000 mgd) • Gravity sludge bed • Sand bed • Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Bed

How the Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Bed (VSDB) Works

Sludge is spread on the media plates through sludge inlet line valved discharge ports. Prior to this discharge, polymer is injected into the sludge and rapidly mixed at the polymer/sludge blender.

Gravity dewatering begins as the bed is filling. The clear liquid, separated from the flocculated solids flows down through the porous media, through the support plenum and out of the bed structure.

After the bed is filled to maximum liquid level, the conditioned sludge feed is shut off.

The vacuum pump is started creating a vacuum in the plenum and media causing a uniform pressure on top of the cake.

Motorized filtrate drain valves automatically controlled by level sensors discharge the filtrate from the plenum of the VSDB. Typically, filtrate suspended solids are less than 30 mg/l, indicating very high solids capture in the dewatered sludge.

As the sludge continues to consolidate and shrink, the resulting cake will start to crack. This will continue until the bed is uniformly cracked and the vacuum gradually lost. As the plenum area loses vacuum the vacuum pumps shut down.

The stop-gates can now be removed to allow a front-end loader access to the bed to remove the dewatered sludge. The surface is then washed down with high pressure, low volume water. This washdown water is discharged to the sewer or directed back to the head of the plant.

Following cleaning, the stop-gates are placed back into position and the facility is ready for another dewatering cycle.

FROM CONVENTIONAL DRYING BEDS TO HIGH RATE, HIGH CAPACITY VACUUM DEWATERING BEDS

ABSTRACT

Minimal draining, decanting, and evaporative drying have been the predominant factors determining performance of the well known lagoon, conventional sand drying bed and evaporation bed process. Previously, the "rule of thumb" design procedure determined the sizing of these beds. Fortunately, more rational design factors were established from experience and published in "MOP 20, l983", resulting in facilities with proper capacity.

Efforts to improve the under drainage in the bed type device have been made over the years, but none have been made as durable as the rigid, porous, epoxy- bonded, aluminum oxide surface which is guaranteed for 20 years.

Attempts at increasing the dewatering rate by applying pressure to the beds have been attempted but only vacuum has proven to be feasible. Early generations of the vacuum bed have applied 8 - l0" Hg, but the current design allows for 24 - 26" Hg vacuum. This has resulted in higher capacities and dryer cakes, in a shorter cycle time.

Case studies will be presented for this low energy, simple technology system that has over 18 years experience on various types of sludges at over 180 locations.

Prior thickening of water plant residuals and bio-solids digestion is also addressed as being important for any type of drying bed and mechanical dewatering. Consideration must be given to the final disposition of the resulting cake, be that land filling or beneficial use.

KEYWORDS

Sludge, Bio-Solids, Residuals, Solids Dewatering, Vacuum-Assisted Drying Beds, Vacuum Beds

INTRODUCTION

Municipal and industrial, water and wastewater processes produce a liquid sludge containing a small amount of solids, composed mostly of water. This sludge could be more easily and economically handled if the volume were reduced by removing the water, resulting in a cake which could then undergo further processing or be transported. Beds, by drainage and evaporation have been utilized to achieve this result since the beginning of accepted treatment practices. In more recent decades, mechanical devices have proven to speed this function but these approaches have added complexity to the operation and have resulted in increased initial investment.

This is the most widely used approach to dewatering, the bed with its advantages, disadvantages and developments in their application that may or may not help their performance. Design procedure recommendations made by authorities in this industry are repeated here. Finally, this is a proven process that successfully responds to a number of the problems and questions posed by prior dewatering techniques approaches; the Vacuum Sludge Dewatering Bed.

The widely utilized sand drying or evaporation bed technology has substantial advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages of this type of bed are :

- requires lower operational skill and attention.
- requires lower chemical and energy consumption.
- requires lower sensitivity to sludge character quality and variability.
- result in higher cake dry solids concentration.

Disadvantages are:

- limited by well known "rule of thumb" approach resulting in substantially lower area estimates than is actually required, providing erroneous cost estimates and inefficient treatment plants.
- large land area requirement.
- climate dependent.
- highly visible to the public and considering their function of drying of the liquid surface as the lower layers remains liquid, becoming septic, unpleasant odors are generated.
- labor intensive in cake removal due to prohibition of equipment in the bed for cake removal.
- sand compaction, solids plugging, and loss in bed cleaning requiring replacement.

Developments have addressed some of the disadvantages, but in doing so have created additional problems.

Covers reduce the effect of rainfall causing delays in cake removal. While this may increase the capacity, the effects of solar radiation are eliminated, which increases humidity and reduces the drying effect of wind. A cover may increase capacity and will substantially increase the cost of a facility.

Complete or partial paving of the bed to enhance cake removal by loader equipment may reduce labor but also reduces the necessary loss of filtered liquid to the underdrain, thus requiring that dewatering is solely from variable evaporation.

Chemical coagulation and flocculation of the feed sludge to function in a similar manner to mechanical dewatering results in the need for more highly skilled operators and increased costs.

Observations have also shown that distribution of chemically treated solids on the bed dictate piping revisions. Further, overdoses of chemicals is prevalent due to the need for feed sludges to be more stable, thickened, and less variable during filling.

None of these factors should eliminate the "Drying Bed" from a designers’ consideration, but all factors must be considered for in the sizing of this approach.

Alternates to paving the bed for mechanical cake removal while maintaining drainage of filtrate have been developed and used by numerous of facilities in long term operation.

One of these alternatives is the 30-year-old English process known as the "Wedgewater" system. A slotted, stainless steel screen, but currently proposed as a plastic block, has proven to be successful in allowing for filtered liquid to the underdrain and facilitate mechanical cake removal.

Observations of excess uncaptured solids into the underdrains and the fragile nature of the plastic block provide the operators the challenge of cleaning underneath and replacement of broken blocks.

In l977, the first of several technology transfers on a new process, "the Vacuum-Assisted Drying Bed". This system utilizes a rigid, porous surface in a vacuum tight concrete bed.

Polymer treated sludge is fed onto the bed to a depth much greater than conventional drying beds. Filtrate passes through this porous surface through the bed underdrain, and is collected in a sealed wet well and pumped away by a submersible pump. Vacuum is applied to this wet well, increasing the drainage of the thickening liquid, resulting in a stiff cake similar to a mechanical dewatering system.

With the Vacuum Bed several disadvantages of the "bed" approach were satisfied. The rigid, porous surface allowed for a loader to remove the cake, reducing labor requirements with no damage to the porous plate. The vacuum reduced or eliminated the need for evaporation of the liquid from the cake.

A comparison of these "bed" approaches in more detail follows and suggested designs are presented. There have been substantial improvements to the "Vacuum-Assisted Drying Bed" which minimizes required operator attention, reduces power consumption, increases the loading (solids per square foot), and increases the resulting cake dry solids while reducing the cycle time of liquid feed to cake removal to less than one day. In some cases the cycle time has been reduced to just several hours.

CONVENTIONAL SAND DRYING BEDS

Structural requirements of this type of bed are simple with containment walls for the liquid, a soft, permeable media that allows for drainage of filtrate, and a collection system of underdrain pipes. Feed piping is simple, with a single discharge inlet from digestion, thickening, or a holding tank. The need for this media to remain porous prohibits cake removal by machinery and raises concern over plugging and need for replacement.

As modifications have provided for paved surfaces, these concrete or asphalt areas are non-filtering, reducing drainage requiring greater reliance on evaporation, but increasing accessibility by machinery for cake removal. In some cases runways allowing for a loader to enter the bed enhance cake removal while not eliminating filtering area. Labor is required to place cake in the bucket.

Design Factors:

The biggest single flaw in the design of sand beds has been antiquated governmental regulations. These may have been written based on the widely held "l.0 to 2.0 square foot per capita", or some non-rational "rule of thumb" basis, recently corrected.

Conventional sand drying beds have been well studied by a broad collection of authorities and used by most treatment facilities in the U.S. for reducing the water content of sludge to produce a handleable cake since the 1930’s, or earlier, per MOP 20, l983, by the Water Pollution Control Federation and the EPA Design Manual, "Dewatering..." 1987.

A design factor was presented in the 1960 version of the MOP 20 that had no consideration for climate and defines the bed performance due to evaporation:

a. primary treatment plant sludge
b. anaerobically digested
c. approximately 6% dry solids

For an aerobically digested waste activated sludge at 2% dry solids in various climates; this may not provide for enough area. This publication based recommendation for design on the above amount and character of sludge and resulted in a "square foot per capita" area sizing. This was adopted by many state agencies as well as an accepted authority producing the "TEN STATES STANDARDS" in the early l970’s.

The 1983 printing of the MOP 20 revises this design approach presenting data pioneered with the current treatment practices of the day by Mr. A. T. Rolan from his paper of 1979. This guided designers to utilize a rational design, considering greater sludge quantities, per capita, character of the sludge, and climate. Several nomographs were published providing designers with realistic procedures for sizing sand beds. This results in parameters for required area calculations based on "pounds of dry solids per square foot per year" capacity.

Major factors affecting drying of biological sludges include:

1. The solids content and type of the sludge. Sludge cakes dry at a rate in proportion to their solids content.
2. Depth of sludge cake - the deeper the cake, the longer the drying time.
3. Biochemical make-up of solids - the more healthy and "fatter" the organisms; the slower the drying.
4. Initial drainability of the cake.
5. Geometry of cake - cracked cakes dry faster due to larger surface area.
6. Evaporation, as defined by; Temperature - at 5 degrees C the vapor pressure is about l/5 of the vapor pressure at 30 degrees C; consequently little winter drying.,relative humidity.,wind.,solar radiation.,rainfall.

Since each of the above may combine to produce the dominant effect; it is understandable that many "old wives tales" exist among operators. For example, a greenhouse could adversely affect drying by raising the relative humidity; or a roofed shed could block the wind with the same results.

The design approximation used in Rolan's 1979 paper is best illustrated numerically:

Theory:

Rolan's calculation is best simplified by considering the depth of bed loading that can be evaporated in a year equal to the annual evaporation plus the draining plus the thickness of the cake.

Covered beds are simply analyzed by substituting the sum of the annual rainfall and the annual evaporation and using this as the "annual evaporation".

Given:

1.0 mgd domestic activated sludge plant with aerobic digestion at a sludge solids of 925 ppd dry solids in central Pennsylvania where evaporation is 30" of water per year.

Design:

Sludge should be applied twice per year in order to average the effect of winter weather at 18" depth, resulting in a 1.4" deep cake at 25% dry solids (about the minimum dry solids that can be handled on a sand bed).

Annual solids loading = 2 cycles/year x 18"/12" x 62.5 pcf. x 2.0% dry solids = 3.77 psf per year.

Annual sludge = 925 (365) = 337,000 pp year

Design bed area = 337,000/3.77 = 89,395 s.f.

This is a surprisingly large area; amounting to 8.9 s.f./capita at a population of 10,000, as compared with regulatory agency "rule of thumb" at 2.0 s.f./capita. It is not surprising to see the many sand bed failures existing today. Plants designed in accordance with the l983 MOP 20; operates satisfactory.

The availability of land area generally accepted, as the primary factor in the decision to employ this type of bed becomes the least of the factors when all factors of design sizing are considered. The actual material cost of constructing the proper area to serve the facility in question becomes the deciding factor.

For a more in depth review of this brief presentation, the full reprinting of Mr. A. T. Rolan's paper, excerpts of MOP 20's and case studies, the writer can provide a copy of his paper from the New York WPCA Section Meeting, June l6-l9, l985; "Performance Criteria for Conventional Sand Drying Beds, Lagoons, & Stockpiles".

In the writer's opinion, sand bed design has changed into the 1990's and been accepted throughout the profession. The current technology is irrefutable. Regulatory agencies, realizing inadequacy of their standards are changing. Sand beds do indeed work. They simply must be properly sized.

WEDGEWIRE OR WEDGEWATER BEDS

This thirty year old system is built as a plastic, interlocking block with a surface of slots 0.25mm (0.01 inch) wide. This block is laid on flat concrete floor with low walls approximately 20' wide and of various lengths up to an understood maximum of 60' to form a false floor, with flashing or wooden filets at the junction of floor and wall.

Chemically treated sludge is fed to the bed to a conventional depth of less than 12". Free water passes through the surface and a substantially thicker sludge remains. This filtration phase generally lasts for a day, enormously reducing the liquid contained in the sludge, as compared to a sand bed. At this point the cake is not handleable in most cases and the final phase prior to removal is subject to evaporation. Except in the most arid climates, and particularly if the process is expected to perform at all times of the year, these beds are enclosed in heated buildings.

Design loadings allow for 0.5 - 1.0 pounds of dry solids per square foot of 2.0% sludge and up to 1.5 pounds for much thicker sludge. Cycle times, like sand beds are dictated by the climate, actual or artificial. Some states have mandated a one-week cycle, while arid climates may allow for two cycles per week to provide a handleable in 3-4 days.

Operational difficulties originate with the need for significant chemical treatment to release free water but that may also bind with the solids. Further, excessive passage of uncaptured solids will clog the underside of the false floor. Removal of all of the blocks and cleaning has regularly been observed to be required frequently. Deeper loading depths and the operation of mechanical equipment seem to exacerbate this problem.

A small, front-steering tractor with a small bucket is limited to remove the cake due to the fragile block, which requires frequent replacement, is time consuming and made worse by the soft cake.

Finally, a treatment plant with solids per the previous analysis for sand bed, aerobically digested waste activated sludge from a 1.0 MGD wastewater treatment plant produced 925 # d.s/day, operated at 1.0 #/s.f. for two cycles per week, annual average requires 6,400 square feet of wedgewater media, 8 - 20' x 40' beds, plus chemical preparation and feed, and washwater systems.

THE VACUUM DEWATERING BED SYSTEM

This technology emerged slowly in the mid 1970's. The system was acknowledged as successful and proven in referenced publications by USEPA and the WPCF prior to and in 1987, coining the name for the process, "the Vacuum-Assisted Drying Bed".

The 1980's saw a number of these facilities on a range of sludge types, built primarily with a sealed wet well containing a submersible pump for filtrate removal while under vacuum. Due to the Net Positive Suction Head requirement of this type of pump the maximum possible vacuum was 8-10" Hg. In the mid 1980's, U. S. Environmental Products, Inc. built a facility eliminating the wet well, as excess cost and inappropriate application of this pump. A shallow, dry pit was designed for a closed impeller pump system with low NPSH requirement allowing the vacuum control valve to be nearly closed increasing the dewatering pressure to 20-22" Hg. This first facility is pictured in the U.S.E.P.A. Design Manual; "Dewatering..." 1987.

In the 1990's, the standard filtrate/vacuum system was revised to eliminate the filtrate pump, replacing it with simpler underdrain level sensors/controls removing the filtrate from the Vacuum Bed by use of a motor operated valve. This allowed complete closure of the vacuum control valve, providing as much as 26" Hg. vacuum for dewatering the solids to dryer cakes in a 24 hour cycle time.

The effect of the vacuum in dewatering the cake is significant with regard to higher liquid loadings, shorter cycle times, and higher resultant cake dry solids while maintaining low power and chemical consumption rates. This approach to removing the liquid from sludge should no longer be referred to a "Drying Bed", subject to effects of climate; this is the "Vacuum Dewatering Bed System".

The core of the system is the rigid, porous media plate; 2" thick x 24" x 48". The structural component of the plate is an AWWA specification - type pea gravel with a working surface of MOH hardness 9 aluminum oxide. Aluminum oxide is utilized due to its irregular, angular particle nature and the reverse meniscus chemical performance reducing bound water and other plugging liquids. The surface is made up of a selection of gradations, blended, and epoxy-bonded with the pea gravel in one process compressed into a mold.

Epoxy formulas have allowed for plates that will allow the filtrate to be recycled for re-use as a raw water source in water treatment plant residual application due to "FDA/EPA" approval. Other epoxy formulations allow for building plates to treat sludges from wet gas scrubber facilities in petroleum refineries at design temperature of 230 degrees F.

Plates are cured, sometimes heat cured in an oven to increase strength, and load test documented. These are installed under manufacturer supervision for use for an unknown life. Fifteen-year monitoring this material in nearly 200 facilities has failed to show any appreciable damage, primarily from mechanical cake removal equipment.

The plates are installed with two types of resilient joints to allow for traffic of high speed, large loader, along with expansion and contraction. Beneath the plates is a shallow layer of l/2" stone for uniform support. A trough plate with stainless steel screens keeps the stone out of the filtrate under-channel. These materials are installed under supervision into the concrete bed.

The details of the concrete can not be discussed in such short order, except to state that the importance of the waterstops, keyways, construction joints, and other details for a vacuum tight structure cannot be over emphasized.

Selection of polymer guides the preparation of a solution for aging in a with a slow speed mixer. Delivery of this solution to an obstructionless polymer/sludge blender is by a variable speed progressing cavity pump where the rate is generally controlled at the bed where the floc is observed by the operator. A constant flow of sludge high for even distribution and filling of the bed in less than 30 minutes to a depth of 16"-24". A level probe in the bottom of the solution tank stops the filling phase, automatically when the solution is depleted.

The initial gravity drainage phase, approximately one-hour, allows several inches decrease in depth of the sludge prior to the need to apply vacuum. The liquid ring vacuum pump is started and the motorized filtrate drain valve closes automatically. Slowly the filtrate level and vacuum rises in the under-channel. The vacuum is drawn through a wall pipe just above the filtrate drain line at the end of the bed. This upper connection also serves as the "sensor" location.

As the "sensor" is wetted, the vacuum pump shuts down, the bed is vented, the motor operated value (MOV) drains the filtrate. A timer recloses the vent and the MOV, then restarting the vacuum pump. Following a few of these automatic drain cyclings, the cake will have cracked sufficiently to begin loosing vacuum, and that pump is shut down.

The aluminum bed entry gate is removed, and the skid steer loader with a protective HDPE shield on the bucket removes the 2-5" cake. The final smear of solids on the working surface of the plate is removed by the high-pressure wash water booster pump providing 150 psi non-potable water to the special nozzle. A number of facilities have successfully experimented with eliminating the wash down step without loss of performance.

The working surface will accumulate solids, greases, oils, and scums that will plug the bed. Chemicals including sodium hypochlorite, commercial degreasers, and muriatic acid are used for soaking, which will reliably clean the plate usually required to be 4-6 times per year or less.

Performance experience has shown the vacuum bed will provide a cake dry solid that approaches that of a belt filter press, in most applications. Our proprietary and well documented "Pre-Coat" process, using ungraded sand piled in front of each of the sludge inlets, eroded and spread on filling, provides for a substantially dryer cake and reduces wet cake weight for disposal due to enhanced filtration.

The suggestion for covering beds is generally accepted as a wise and inexpensive option due to the bed area required, but not necessary except in very rainy climates, and/or where 5 cycle per week operation is the required. Unless temperatures remain less than 15 degrees F for extended periods and continuing operation is needed, a heated enclosure is not necessary. It has been observed at a substantial number of unenclosed facilities in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia that nearly complete dewatering can occur prior to the sludge freezing, at which point it is felt by operators that performance is enhanced.

In keeping with the above example; sizing at a conservative solids loading and frequency as demonstrated at existing facilities, we would recommend a single 16’ x 50’ bed for the l/2 ton of dry solids per day of aerobically digested, waste activated bio-solids. Operator time required may be less than 8 hours per week.

CONCLUSION

Vacuum dewatering beds are a simple process in design and operation as it has removed uncontrollable factors in dewatering, providing a low cost alternative to mechanical methods.

Properly designed on their merits and performance, in comparison of all approaches, the Vacuum Bed may prove to be the most cost-effective method of dewatering available.

Field Service

Technicians will supervise the installation as well as start-up and train plant personnel in proper use of the system.

Customer Service

Trained personnel will periodically inspect your system to review operating procedures and equipment. You can at anytime send a sludge sample to have us verify type of polymer and dosage, loading rates, quality of sludge and performance. You may also contact Dytec Environmental to help troubleshoot your dewatering problems.

Lab Services

A fully equipped laboratory is capable of analyzing most types of sludges as well as running bench scale pilot plants.

Highly-trained and experienced technicians are ready t test sludge to determine its dewatering characteristics, the most economical polymer and dosage, lading rates and performance which can be expected from the sludge sample.

Engineering Services

Dytec Environmental stands ready to submit complete engineering designs, estimates and the costs of operations. If desired, these can be compared to other types of dewatering methods using EPA and other currently accepted criteria to provide 20-year present worth cost-effective analyses. Standard 24" x 36" construction drawings are available which can be tailored to specific sites.

The following are available from Dytec Environmental : laboratory analysis, performance criteria development, construction and operational cost estimates, engineering design, specification development, field installation assistance, start-up supervision and training, ongoing & post startup inspection, repair and retrofit consultation & implementation, expansion of existing facilities.

Solving a Water Plant Sludge Problem

Introduction:

For over 10-years the Lincoln County Lake Norman Water Treatment Plant stored the plant's backwash water and settling basin solids in a concrete tank originally built to store finished water. The water plant utilized a one million gallon pre-stressed concrete tank that was built for finished water storage to hold the water plant solids. An accumulation of sludge in the tank over the years created a burdensome problem that was solved in 2001 with a solids handling project that allowed the pre-stressed concrete tank to be converted back to it's intended use as a clearwell.

This 3-MGD water plant was a state-of-the-art facility when it was built in 1990 except for handling backwash waters and solids accumulating in the settling basins. The County fun, due to adding shortfall, converted the one million gallon clearwell to a storage tank for backwash water as a short-term fix to the funding problem. Backwash water was recycled back through the water plant for treatment when the water plant was first built. Later a NPDES discharge permit was obtained to pump and discharge the supernatant directly back into Lake Norman while continuing to store the solids in the on site tank. The short-term fix turned into a major operational headache before the sludge-handling problem was solved.

A solids handling project, completed in 2001, included construction of two concrete tanks for storage and gravity thickening of waters wasted from backwashing and solid removal in the settling beds. These settled solids are now thickened using a vacuum assisted sludge drying bed while the supernatant from the gravity thickeners is returned to Lake Norman through a gravity drain. The County evaluated using belt filter press, centrifuge, vacuum beds and gravity beds before deciding to construct the vacuum drying beds. The vacuum bed option proved to have the lowest capital cost, lowest annual operation and maintenance cost and the lowest twenty-year present worth cost of the various options considered.

Background:

Lincoln County was formed in 1779 from Tryon County. It is in the southwestern section of the State and is bounded by Mecklenburg, Gaston, Cleveland, Catawba and Iredell counties. The County draws water from Lake Norman, a manmade reservoir on the Catawba River located on the eastern boundary of the County. The lake water is treated at the County water treatment facility, located adjacent to Lake Norman, and the treated water is distributed throughout most of the County to over 7,000 customers. Raw water turbidities range from 3 to 24 NTU with an average turbidity of 8 NTU. The raw water contains very little natural solids. Solids removed in the treatment process are mostly chemical solids from chemicals used to treat the water. Collected water samples showed poor settling characteristics under lab conditions with a dry suspended solids content of 0.43%. A sludge sample only thickened to a dry solids concentration of 0.86% after settling 24-hours.

The water plant is currently configured to pump raw water from the lake through a series of flocculator tanks, rectangular shaped gravity settling basins and dual filter tanks. Solids that are settled out in the settling basins are removed from the floor of the basins with a vacuum sludge removal mechanism that sweeps the floor at preset intervals set by a timer controller. Typically the basins are swept once a day for a period of approximately 20-minutes each. About 30,000 gallons of water, or 1% of the water treated daily, is wasted with each cleaning of solids from the basins. The second source of solids generated by the water treatment process is from backwashing the gravity filters. Currently there are two filter beds. Each filter requires about 50,000 gallons of process water to backwash, 1.7% of the treatment plant capacity. Prior to 2001, when the vacuum beds and gravity thickeners were placed into service, all backwash water and settling basins solids was gravity drained and stored in a 1.0-MG pre-stressed concrete tank originally constructed to store finished water. Over the first 10 plus years of operation the solids were stored in the tank. The water plant operators would periodically draw supernatant off the tank and return the water initially through the water plant and later to Lake Norman with a NPDES discharge permit. The solids remained stored in the tank over this period of time till the tank was in effect full and something else had to be done.

Solids Handling Design:

In March of 2000 the County ask WK Dickson to help find a solution to the water plant sludge problem. Working with the water plant ORC, Mr. Larry Warren, and the County Engineer, WK Dickson evaluated various alternatives to handling solids including belt filter press, centrifuge, vacuum drying beds and gravity drying beds. Sludge dewatering proposals were received from major equipment manufacturers and site visits were made to various water plants using a variety of sludge dewatering methods. After evaluating all alternatives both the belt press and vacuum beds were found to be viable alternatives for dewatering the sludge. Centrifuges and gravity beds was eliminated as viable alternatives early in the evaluation as a result of equipment costs, performance data and discussions with other users. Both the belt press and the vacuum bed manufacturers showed through lab pilot testing to be able to dewater the Lincoln County sludge to a 15% dry solids, producing a dry cake that will pass a paint filter test.

Sludge Facilities:
The sludge handling facilities includes; two gravity thickener tanks, one vacuum drying bed and a building housing; controls, sludge pump, vacuum pump and a polymer feed system. The backwash water and sludge vacuumed from the settling basins flows by gravity to the thickener tanks through a 20-inch pipe. Piping and valves are provided to enable the two tanks to work together or as separate tanks to store the sludge until dewatered. The settled sludge is drawn from the bottom of the thickeners by a centrifugal pump and spread over the vacuum drying beds using a total of seven 2-inch discharge pipes with valves to distribute the sludge over the bed. Supernatant is drawn from the thickener tanks and discharged to Lake Norman through a 12-inch gravity drain. A vacuum pump and polymer system is available to dewater the sludge on the beds. The sludge filtrate is returned to the gravity thickeners through an on site pumping station and force main. The dried sludge is removed from the beds with a small bobcat and trucked to the County's solid waste site for disposal.

Gravity Thickener Tanks: Each tank is 35-feet in diameter with a 22'-3" vertical side water depth and a 10'-10" conical bottom.. Each tank can store 199,000 gallons. Two 6-inch perforated pipes ring the diameter of the tanks above the conical bottom at two different levels to remove the supernatant after the sludge has settled. The supernatant is drained through a 12-inch pipe and discharged directly into Lake Norman. Piping and valves are available to control flow to the two tanks and to transfer sludge between the two tanks. A 8-inch suction pipe is provided to draw sludge from the bottom of each thickener with a 700 gpm sludge pump.

Vacuum Drying Bed: a 1,240 square foot vacuum bed sized for 6.0-MGD of treatment capacity is provided. The bed is 16-feet wide by 76'-8" long with seven 2" feed pipes equally spaced along one side of the bed. An 8-inch filtrate drain runs the length of the bed and is gravity drained to an on site submersible pumping station. The filtrate is drawn off the tank and pumped back to the gravity thickeners. Polymer is blended with the sludge when the vacuum bed is loaded from the thickener. A 2-hp vacuum pump is tied to the filtrate drain under the bed and operates to draw a vacuum on the bed after the operator loads the bed from the thickener tank. U.S. Environmental Products, Inc. furnished the vacuum drying bed and associated equipment.

Sludge Pump: The County uses a Godwin self priming pump to draw sludge from the thickener and pump the settled sludge to the vacuum bed. Polymer is blended with the sludge at the discharge of the sludge pump. The operator has a control station adjacent to the vacuum bed to control the pump and the polymer feed. The sludge pump, polymer tank and vacuum pump are housed in a building located adjacent to the vacuum bed.

Sludge Dewatering:
The operators store sludge in the gravity thickener tanks until they are ready dewater the sludge. The sludge settled out in the conical bottom of the thickeners and the supernatant is drained off and discharged back to Lake Norman. Currently, the operators control the supernatant removal manually. There are also timer controlled valves provided to allow supernatant drains to open and close with a 24-hour time clock.

The process of drawing sludge from the tanks and pumping onto the drying bed takes approximately 30-minutes. The operator has already prepared the polymer in the 700-gallon mixing tank prior to operating the sludge pump. The polymer is blended with the sludge as the sludge is loaded on the vacuum bed. The operator can control the speed of the sludge pump and the rate of polymer dosage from a control station located adjacent to the vacuum bed. There are also control valves on the sever (7) bed inlet pipes to control the loading of the bed. After the process of loading the bed is completed, the vacuum bed is allow to sit for the next 24-hours at which time filtrate drains through the bed to the filter drain located under the bottom of the bed. The next day the operators will operate the vacuum pump and complete the drying process. This generally takes about 30-minutes and leaves a dry cake of about 10% to 12% on the beds. Pilot testing during the design showed a dried sludge cake of about 15% could be achieved with the addition of a small amount of builders sand added in from of loading the bed with sludge. This involved placing a bucket of sand in from of each discharge pipe prior to pumping the sludge onto the bed. The County thus far has not seen the need to use the sand to enhance the dewatering.

After the vacuum has been pulled on the bed, the operator uses a small bobcat to remove the sludge. The sludge is removed from the bed and placed on an asphalt area adjacent to the bed where the sludge is left for a period of time to air dry. It generally takes 20 to 30 minutes to remove the sludge from the bed. The air drying of the sludge before trucking the sludge to the land fill has proven to be very effective and results in a sludge cake that is easy to handle.

Conclusion:

The vacuum bed has proven to be an effective method to dewater sludge at the County's Lake Norman water plant. The sludge handling project has allowed a much needed clearwell tank to be converted from a sludge storage tank to its intended use. Key to a successful system is having effective gravity thickener tanks to store sludge until the operators are ready to dewater the sludge. Also key are sludge pumps and controls to allow the operators to easily remove the sludge from the thickeners and transfer the sludge to the vacuum bed for dewatering.

Here are several pictoral illustrations which will provide you with a better perspective of what a VSDB looks like.


Air Dried Sludge.JPG


Control Panel.JPG


Lincoln County Solids Handling Facilities.JPG


Loaded Bed After Filtrate Drained.JPG

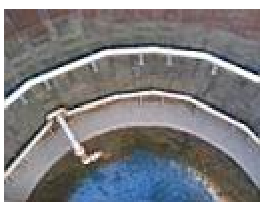

Loaded with Sludge.JPG


Loading Vacuum Bed.JPG


Polymer Mixing Tank.JPG


Sludge Cake.JPG


Sludge Pump.JPG


Sludge Thickener.JPG


Vacuum Bed, Thickeners & Control Building.JPG


Vacuumed Sludge Cake.JPG

ASIAN PACIFIC & OCEANIC DISTRIBUTOR:
ABS Engineering (Hong Kong) Limited
Unit 19, 6/F Block A. Wah Lok Industrial Building
31-41 Shan Mei Street, Fo Tan, Shatin, Hong Kong
Tel: +852-217-9707-6605. Fax: +852-2385-7487
Website: www.abs-hk.net. Email Address : bioelixirs@abs-hk.net

DYTEC ENVIRONMENTAL
434 South Williams Blvd ., 220., Tucson, Arizona 85711 (USA)
Telephone: (520) 750-7526., Fax: (520) 747-1431
Email Address: dytec@dy-tec.com
Website : http://www.dy-tec.com