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Standard Practices for Extraction of Trace Elements from Sediments¹

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1. Scope

1.1 These practices describe the partial extraction of soils, bottom sediments, suspended sediments, and waterborne materials to determine the extractable concentrations of certain trace elements.

1.1.1 *Practice A* is capable of extracting concentrations of aluminum, boron, barium, cadmium, calcium, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, lead, magnesium, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, potassium, sodium, strontium, vanadium, and zinc from the preceding materials. Other metals may be determined using this practice. This extraction is the more vigorous and more complicated of the two.

1.1.2 *Practice B* is capable of extracting concentrations of aluminum, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, lead, manganese, nickel, and zinc from the preceding materials. Other metals may be determined using this practice. This extraction is less vigorous and less complicated than Practice A.

1.2 These practices describe three means of preparing samples prior to digestion:

1.2.1 Freeze-drying.

1.2.2 Air-drying at room temperature.

1.2.3 Accelerated air-drying, for example, 95°C.

1.3 The detection limit and linear concentration range of each procedure for each element is dependent on the atomic absorption spectrophotometric or other technique employed and may be found in the manual accompanying the instrument used. Also see various ASTM test methods for determining specific metals using atomic absorption spectrophotometric techniques.

1.3.1 The sensitivity of the practice can be adjusted by varying the sample size (14.2) or the dilution of the sample (14.6), or both.

1.4 Extractable trace element analysis provides more information than total metal analysis for the detection of pollutants, since absorption, complexation, and precipitation are the methods by which metals from polluted waters are retained in sediments.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

[D887 Practices for Sampling Water-Formed Deposits](#)

[D1129 Terminology Relating to Water](#)

[D1193 Specification for Reagent Water](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Refer to Terminology [D1129](#).

¹ These practices are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D19](#) on Water and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D19.07](#) on Sediments, Geomorphology, and Open-Channel Flow.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

4. Summary of Practices

4.1 The chemical portion of both practices involves acid digestion to disassociate the elements complexed in precipitated hydroxides, carbonates, sulfides, oxides, and organic materials. Surface but not interstitially bound elements will be desorbed in the case of clay mineral particulates. The silicate lattices of the minerals are not appreciably attacked **(1-5)**.³

4.2 These practices provide samples suitable for analysis using flame or flameless atomic-absorption spectrophotometry, or other instrumental or colorimetric procedures.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Industrialized and urban areas have been found to deposit a number of toxic elements into environments where those elements were previously either not present or were found in trace amounts. Consequently, it is important to be able to measure the concentration of these pollution-deposited elements to properly study pollution effects.

5.2 This procedure is concerned with the pollution-related trace elements that are described in 4.1 rather than those elements incorporated in the silicate lattices of the minerals from which the sediments were derived. These pollution-related trace elements are released into the water and reabsorbed by the sediments with changes in general water quality, pH in particular. These elements are a serious source of pollution. The elements locked in the silicate lattices are not readily available in the biosphere **(1-8)**.

5.3 When comparing the trace element concentrations, it is important to consider the particle sizes to be analyzed **(8, 9)**.

5.3.1 The finer the particle the greater the surface area. Consequently, a potentially greater amount of a given trace element can be adsorbed on the surface of fine, particulate samples **(4)**. For particle sizes smaller than 80 mesh, metal content is no longer dependent on surface area. Therefore, if this portion of the sediment is used, the analysis with respect to sample type (that is, sand, salt, or clay) is normalized. It has also been observed that the greatest contrast between anomalous and background samples is obtained when less than 80-mesh portion of the sediment is used **(4, 5)**.

5.3.2 After the samples have been dried, care must be taken not to grind the sample in such a way to alter the natural particle-size distribution **(14.1)**. Fracturing a particle disrupts the silicate lattice and makes available those elements which otherwise are not easily digested **(6)**. Normally, aggregates of dried, natural soils, sediments, and many clays dissociate once the reagents are added **(14.3 and 15.2)**.

6. Interferences

6.1 The only interferences are those encountered in the final determination of metals using atomic-absorption spectrophotometry or other instrumental or colorimetric procedures.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Digestion Beakers*—Use only beakers made of borosilicate glass or TFE-fluorocarbons.

7.2 *Watchglasses*—Use ribbed watchglasses to cover the digestion beakers. These covers should fit loosely to allow evaporation of the digestion medium.

7.3 *Filter Paper*—The qualitative grade paper employed should be a fast filtering, hardened, ashless paper retaining both coarse and gelatinous precipitates.

7.4 *Sieves*, nylon, 10, 20, and 80-mesh.

7.5 *Petri Dishes*, large.

7.6 *Freeze-Drier*.

7.7 *Polyethylene or Polypropylene Bottles*, wide-mouth, 125-mL capacity.

7.8 *Suction Filtration Apparatus*, ~~Apparatus~~, 0.45- μ m filter.

7.9 *Automatic Shaker*.

7.10 *Volumetric Flasks*, 50 mL and 100-mL capacity.

8. Reagents

8.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in tests. Acids must have a low-metal content or should be doubly distilled and checked for purity. Unless otherwise indicated, all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society.⁴

³ The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the references at the end of these practices.

⁴ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For Suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Annual Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.