

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PRODUCING DESIRED XYLENE ISOMERS

STATEMENT OF PRIORITY

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Application No. 14/040,391 which was filed September 27, 2013 the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure generally relates to systems and methods for producing desired isomers of xylene, and more particularly relates to systems and methods for recovering heat during xylene isomer fractionations in a xylene isomer recovery process.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Xylene isomers are important intermediates in chemical syntheses, and specific xylene isomers are desired for different processes. Paraxylene is a feedstock for terephthalic acid, and terephthalic acid is used in the manufacture of synthetic fibers and resins. Metaxylene is used in the manufacture of certain plasticizers, azo dyes, and wood preservatives. Orthoxylene is a feedstock for phthalic anhydride production, and phthalic anhydride is used in the manufacture of certain plasticizers, dyes, and pharmaceutical products.

[0004] Desired xylene isomers typically are separated from mixed xylene streams by using an adsorbent selective to the desired isomer. The desired isomer is adsorbed, and the remaining isomers are discharged in a mixed raffinate stream. A desorbent is then used to desorb the desired xylene isomer, and the desorbent and desired xylene isomer are collected and separated by distillation (also referred to as fractionation). The desorbents are typically referred to as either heavy or light, where a heavy desorbent has a higher molecular weight and a higher boiling point than xylene and a light desorbent has a lower molecular weight and a lower boiling point than xylene. Xylene isomer recovery systems with heavy desorbents tend to use less energy than systems with light desorbents, because the desorbent does not need to be repeatedly evaporated and lifted in the fractionation step. However, heavy desorbent systems require stringent feed purity to control accumulation of

undesired compounds in the recycled desorbent. The undesired compounds are impurities that reduce the desorbent effectiveness and product purity. Additional equipment is needed to maintain the heavy desorbent purity during the desorbent recycling process. The distillation columns in heavy desorbent systems have higher reboiler temperatures, which leads to higher operating pressures. The higher operating pressures require higher pressure ratings for the equipment involved, which increase the equipment capital cost.

[0005] A light desorbent system allows a relaxed feed specification relative to a heavy desorbent system. This helps to offset the increased energy costs associated with recovering light desorbent as a distillation column overhead stream. The light desorbent systems also provide substantial savings in the total equipment count for xylene recovery systems, because the additional equipment for purifying and storing the desorbent is not needed. The light desorbent xylene recovery systems also have lower distillation column operating pressures, so thinner shell thicknesses and lower pressure ratings can be used to further reduce capital costs for installing new systems. Toluene is one example of a light desorbent that can be used, and toluene is less expensive than many of the heavy desorbents available.

[0006] Energy is required to evaporate the light desorbent during distillation. Fuel is typically burned to provide the heat energy for operating the distillation columns, but in some embodiments, electrical power is less expensive than heat produced by combusting fuel. Electrical energy can be used for evaporating the light desorbent in the distillation reboiler by using a heat pump to recover heat from the overhead stream. The heat pump transfers some of the energy for distillation from the burning of fuel to the use of electrical power.

[0007] Accordingly, it is desirable to develop methods and systems for producing desired xylene isomers from mixed xylene streams using a heat pump to recover energy from the distillation column overheads. In addition, it is desirable to develop methods and systems for producing desired xylene isomers while minimizing the burning of fuel for energy. Furthermore, other desirable features and characteristics of the present embodiment will become apparent from the subsequent detailed description and the

appended claims, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and this background.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0008] A method is provided for producing a desired xylene isomer. The method includes adsorbing the desired xylene isomer from a mixed xylene stream in an adsorbent chamber. The desired xylene isomer is desorbed with a desorbent to produce an extract stream with the desired xylene isomer and the desorbent, where the desorbent has a lower boiling point than the desired xylene isomer. The extract stream is fractionated in an extract fractionator to produce a low pressure extract overhead stream with gaseous desorbent. The low pressure extract overhead stream is pressurized to produce a high pressure extract overhead stream with a temperature greater than an extract reboiler temperature. The high pressure extract overhead stream is condensed in an extract process reboiler, and produces a liquid extract overhead stream.

[0009] Another method is also provided for producing a desired xylene isomer. The method includes fractionating a mixed raffinate stream in a raffinate fractionator to produce a low pressure raffinate overhead stream including gaseous desorbent and a raffinate xylene isomer stream including raffinate xylene isomers different than the desired isomer. The low pressure raffinate overhead stream is pressurized to produce a high pressure raffinate overhead stream with a temperature above a raffinate reboiler temperature. The high pressure raffinate overhead stream is condensed in a raffinate process reboiler, which produces a liquid raffinate overhead stream. The isomerization stream is isomerized in an isomerization unit to produce the desired xylene isomer.

[0010] A system is also provided for producing the desired xylene isomer. The system includes an adsorbent chamber suitable for containing a selective adsorbent, where the selective adsorbent is selective to the desired xylene isomer. An extract fractionator is coupled to the adsorbent chamber, where the extract fractionator includes an extract process reboiler, and an extract overhead receiver. An extract compressor is coupled to the extract overhead receiver and the extract process reboiler, and configured to raise the pressure and temperature of a gas between the extract overhead receiver and the extract process reboiler.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] The present embodiment will hereinafter be described in conjunction with the following drawing figures, wherein like numerals denote like elements, and wherein:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a xylene isomer production system and method for producing xylene isomers; and

[0013] FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of the isomer recovery unit of the xylene isomer production system of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] The following detailed description is merely exemplary in nature and is not intended to limit the application and uses of the embodiment described. Furthermore, there is no intention to be bound by any theory presented in the preceding background or the following detailed description.

[0015] The various embodiments described herein relate to systems and methods for producing a desired xylene isomer from a mixed xylene feedstock. A feed stream is fractionated in a feed fractionator to produce a mixed xylene stream with hydrocarbons containing 8 carbons (referred to herein as C8 compounds). The mixed xylene stream is fed into an adsorbent chamber with a selective adsorbent that preferentially adsorbs a desired xylene isomer. A desorbent is fed into the adsorbent chamber to displace the desired xylene isomer, which exits the adsorbent chamber in an extract stream. The other xylene isomers pass from the adsorbent chamber in a mixed raffinate stream including the raffinate xylene isomers and the desorbent. The desorbent is separated from the desired xylene isomer in an extract fractionator, and a heat pump is used to recover energy from an extract overhead stream to evaporate extract column bottoms in an extract process reboiler. The overhead stream is pressurized, which increases the temperature to above the temperature in the extract process reboiler, and then condensed in the extract process reboiler. A similar heat pump can also be used to recover desorbent from the mixed raffinate stream.

[0016] Reference is now made to an exemplary embodiment of a xylene isomer product system in FIG. 1. A feed stream **10** is fed to a feed fractionator **12** to produce a feed fractionator overhead stream **14**, a feed fractionator bottoms stream **16**, and a mixed xylene stream **20**. The feed fractionator overhead stream **14** includes hydrocarbons with 7 carbons or less (C7-), the feed fractionator bottoms stream **16** includes hydrocarbons with 9 carbons or more (C9+), and the mixed xylene stream **20** includes hydrocarbons with 8 carbons (C8). The different fractions (such as C7-, C8, and C9+) are separated based on the relative boiling points of the compounds present. The feed fractionator **12** can be operated from a pressure of 5 kilo Pascals absolute (kPa) to 1,800 kPa (0.7 pounds per square inch absolute (PSIA) to 260 PSIA), and a temperature from 35 degrees centigrade (°C) to 360 °C (65 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to 680 °F). The feed stream **10** has a relatively high concentration of aromatic compounds, such as 40 to 100 mass percent.

[0017] Suitable feed streams **10** for producing a desired xylene isomer are available from many sources. For example, a fluid catalytic cracking (FCC) unit and fractionator, when run in high severity mode, can produce a fraction with hydrocarbons having 7 to 10 carbons (C7-10), where 60 mass percent of the hydrocarbons are aromatic. Certain coal liquefaction processes produce hydrocarbon streams rich in aromatic compounds, and these hydrocarbon streams are suitable for use as the feed stream **10**. Other possible sources include various petroleum refining processes, thermal or catalytic cracking of hydrocarbons, or petrochemical conversion processes, including hydrocarbon streams processed in a reformer using a catalyst designed to produce aromatic compounds. Additional processing steps (not illustrated) can be used to remove non-aromatic compounds from the feed stream **10** or the mixed xylene stream **20** in some embodiments, such as liquid liquid extraction, extractive crystallization, clay treating, or additional fractionation.

[0018] The mixed xylene stream **20** is introduced into an isomer recovery unit **22** that produces a desired xylene isomer stream **24** and a raffinate xylene isomer stream **26**, as described more fully below. The raffinate xylene isomer stream **26** is introduced into an isomerization unit **28** where the raffinate xylene isomers, which are the xylene isomers other than the desired xylene isomer, are isomerized to produce more of the desired xylene isomer. The desired xylene isomer was removed in the isomer recovery unit **22**, and the

removal of one isomer shifts the composition of the raffinate xylene isomer stream **26** away from equilibrium. The raffinate xylene isomer stream **26** therefore primarily includes 2 of the 3 xylene isomers, so the desired xylene isomer, which is the isomer primarily absent from the raffinate xylene isomer stream **26**, is produced in the isomerization unit **28** to bring the mixture closer to an equilibrium ratio. The equilibrium ratio is 20 to 25 percent orthoxylene, 20 to 30 percent paraxylene, and 50 to 60 percent metaxylene at 250 °C, and this equilibrium ratio varies with temperature and other conditions.

[0019] In an exemplary embodiment, the isomerization unit **28** includes an isomerization catalyst **30**, and operates at suitable isomerization conditions. Suitable isomerization conditions include a temperature from 100 °C to 500 °C (200 °F to 900 °F), or from 200 °C to 400 °C (400 °F to 800 °F), and a pressure from 500 kPa to 5,000 kPa (70 PSIA to 700 PSIA). The isomerization unit **28** includes a sufficient volume of isomerization catalyst to provide a liquid hourly space velocity, with respect to the raffinate xylene isomer stream **26**, from 0.5 to 50 hr⁻¹, or from 0.5 to 20 hr⁻¹. Hydrogen may be present at up to 15 moles of hydrogen per mole of xylene, but in some embodiments hydrogen is essentially absent from the isomerization unit **28**. The isomerization unit **28** may include one, two, or more reactors, where suitable means are employed to ensure a suitable isomerization temperature at the entrance to each reactor. The xylenes are contacted with the isomerization catalyst in any suitable manner, including upward flow, downward flow, or radial flow.

[0020] The isomerization catalyst includes a zeolitic aluminosilicate with a Si:Al₂ ratio greater than 10/1, or greater than 20/1 in some embodiments, and a pore diameter of 5 to 8 angstroms. Some examples of suitable zeolites include, but are not limited to, MFI, MEL, EUO, FER, MFS, MTT, MTW, TON, MOR, and FAU, and gallium may be present as a component of the crystal structure. In some embodiments, the Si:Ga₂ mole ratio is less than 500/1, or less than 100/1 in other embodiments. The proportion of zeolite in the catalyst is generally from 1 to 99 weight percent, or from 25 to 75 weight percent. In some embodiments, the isomerization catalyst includes 0.01 to 2 weight percent of one or more of ruthenium (Ru), rhodium (Rh), palladium (Pd), osmium (Os), Iridium (Ir), and platinum (Pt), but in other embodiments the isomerization catalyst is substantially absent

of any metallic compound, where substantial absence is less than 0.01 weight percent. The balance of the isomerization catalyst is an inorganic oxide binder, such as alumina, and a wide variety of catalyst shapes can be used, including spherical or cylindrical.

[0021] An isomerized stream **32** exits the isomerization unit **28** and returns to the isomer recovery unit **22**, so some material is recycled and repeatedly passes between the isomer recovery unit **22** and the isomerization unit **28**. The isomerized stream **32** may be passed through the feed fractionator **12** in some embodiments (as shown), so C8 compounds that were changed to a compound with a different number of carbons in the isomerization unit **28** can be removed from the loop. The isomerized stream **32** includes more of the desired xylene isomers than in the raffinate xylene isomer stream **26**, so more of the desired xylene isomer is available for recovery. In this manner, the total amount of the desired xylene isomer recovered can exceed the equilibrium value.

[0022] Reference is now made to the exemplary embodiment of the isomer recovery unit **22** illustrated in FIG. 2. The mixed xylene stream **20** is introduced to an adsorbent chamber **34** to absorb the desired xylene isomer. The desired xylene isomer is paraxylene in many embodiments, but the desired xylene isomer can also be metaxylene or orthoxylene in other embodiments. The adsorbent chamber **34** includes a selective adsorbent **35** that preferentially adsorbs the desired xylene isomer over the other xylene isomers. In an exemplary embodiment, the selective adsorbent **35** can be crystalline alumino-silicate, such as type X or type Y crystalline aluminosilicate zeolites. The selective adsorbent **35** contains exchangeable cationic sites with one or more metal cations, where the metal cations can be one or more of lithium, potassium, beryllium, magnesium, calcium, strontium, barium, nickel, copper, silver, manganese, and cadmium. Adsorption conditions vary, but typically range from 35 °C to 200 °C (100 °F to 400 °F) and from 100 kPa to 3,500 kPa (14 PSIG to 500 PSIG).

[0023] The mixed xylene stream **20** is separated into an extract stream **36** and a mixed raffinate stream **70** in the adsorbent chamber **34**. The selective adsorbent **35** preferentially adsorbs the desired xylene isomer, and the remaining raffinate xylene isomers are discharged with excess desorbent in the mixed raffinate stream **70**. Desorbent is charged into the adsorbent chamber **34** by a desorbent stream **38** to desorb the desired xylene

isomer, and the mixture of desorbent and desired xylene isomer are discharged in the extract stream **36**. Several different embodiments of the adsorbent chamber **34** are possible, such as a single bed operated in batch fashion, where the mixed raffinate stream **70** is collected before the desired xylene isomer is desorbed, and the extract stream **36** is collected after desorbing. In another embodiment, a plurality of adsorbent beds are used, and the introduction point of the mixed xylene stream **20** and the desorbent stream **38** are gradually moved through the different adsorbent beds. The discharge points of the extract stream **36** and the mixed raffinate stream **70** are also gradually moved through the different adsorbent beds, so each individual adsorbent bed is used in a semi-batch mode and the combination simulates a continuous operation. The desorbent has a lower molecular weight than xylene, and a desorbent boiling point lower than that the desired xylene isomer boiling point or a raffinate xylene isomer boiling point. In many embodiments the desorbent is toluene, but other desorbents are possible.

[0024] In an exemplary embodiment, the extract stream **36** is introduced into an extract fractionator **40** to separate the desorbent from the desired xylene isomer. The extract fractionator **40** includes an extract process reboiler **56** and an extract overhead receiver **44**, where the extract process reboiler **56** and overhead receiver **44** can be either fluidly connected to the main distillation column of the extract fractionator **40**, they can be combined in a single unit, or other designs can be used. The extract process reboiler **56** is configured to heat an extract column bottoms **42**, which is the liquids at the bottom of the main distillation column of the extract fractionator **40**. The desorbent exits the extract fractionator **40** as a vapor in a low pressure extract overhead stream **46**, and the desired xylene isomer exits the extract fractionator **40** as a liquid in the desired xylene isomer stream **24**. The extract fractionator **40** is operated to maintain the low pressure extract overhead stream **46** between 100 °C and 130 °C (210 °F to 270 °F) and a pressure from 100 kPa to 150 kPa (14 PSIA to 22 PSIA). This produces an extract reboiler temperature of 150 °C to 180 °C (300 °F to 360 °F).

[0025] The low pressure extract overhead stream **46** passes through the extract overhead receiver **44** and remains a vapor at essentially the same temperature and pressure when entering the extract overhead receiver **44**. In an exemplary embodiment, the low pressure extract overhead stream **46** is heated in a low pressure extract overhead heater **48** to

increase the temperature by 10 °C to 20 °C prior to pressurization, which increases the low pressure extract overhead stream 46 temperature to 110 °C to 150 °C (230 °F to 300 °F). A liquid extract overhead stream 58 (described below) can be used to supply the heat for the low pressure extract overhead heater 48, but in alternate embodiments other heat sources are used.

[0026] The low pressure extract overhead stream 46 is pressurized to produce a high pressure extract overhead stream 52, and the temperature increases as the pressure increases. The low pressure extract overhead stream 46 is pressurized to a pressure sufficient to bring the temperature to a point above the extract reboiler temperature of 150 °C to 180 °C (300 °F to 360 °F), as described above. In some embodiments, an extract compressor 50 is used to pressurize the low pressure extract overhead stream 46, but other techniques could also be used. In an exemplary embodiment, the pressure is increased by 200 to 500 kPa (30 to 70 PSIA), which brings the pressure of the high pressure extract overhead stream to 300 kPa to 650 kPa (40 to 90 PSIA), but other pressures are also possible. The temperature of the high pressure extract overhead stream 52 is 170 °C to 200 °C (340 °F to 390 °F) after pressurization. The high pressure extract overhead stream 52 remains in the vapor state after pressurization. A high pressure extract overhead pressure regulator 54 can be used to prevent unintentional over pressurization of the high pressure extract overhead stream 52, where the high pressure extract overhead pressure regulator 54 is coupled between the high pressure extract overhead stream 52 and the low pressure extract overhead stream 46, such as at the extract overhead receiver 44.

[0027] The vapor in the high pressure extract overhead stream 52 is condensed in the extract process reboiler 56 that is configured to heat the extract column bottoms 42, as mentioned above. The extract process reboiler 56 is a heat exchanger, such as a shell and tube heat exchanger, but other types of heat exchangers can also be used. The gases in the high pressure extract overhead stream 52 provide heat to the extract column bottoms 42 as they condense. The condensed liquid exits the extract process reboiler 56 in a liquid extract overhead stream 58, and the temperature in the liquid extract overhead stream 58 is lower than the temperature in the high pressure extract overhead stream 52. In an exemplary embodiment, the liquid extract overhead stream 58 has a temperature 2 °C to 15 °C lower than the temperature of the high pressure extract overhead stream 52. The

liquid extract overhead stream **58** can be used to pre-heat the low pressure extract overhead stream **46** in the low pressure extract overhead heater **48**, as described above, which can lower the temperature of the liquid extract overhead stream **58** by 5 °C to 20 °C. The extract fractionator **40** also includes an extract utility reboiler **60** for additional heating, if needed. The extract utility reboiler **60** can be heated by steam, combustion of fuel gas or other fuels, electric heaters, or other techniques known to those skilled in the art. The extract utility reboiler **60** and the extract process reboiler **56** are each configured to heat the extract column bottoms **42**, and can be in series, in parallel, or in any configuration suitable for heating the extract column bottoms **42**.

[0028] The temperature of the liquids in the liquid extract overhead stream **58** may be lowered even further in a liquid extract overhead heat exchanger **62**. The temperature is lowered to a point sufficient to prevent the desorbent from boiling in the extract overhead receiver **44**, as described more fully below. In one embodiment, the temperature is lowered to below the temperature of the low pressure extract overhead stream **46** in the extract overhead receiver **44**, but in other embodiments higher temperatures are used. The liquids in the liquid extract overhead stream **58** remain in the liquid state in the extract overhead receiver **44** when the vapor pressure is less than the actual pressure, and the vapor pressure depends on the temperature. Heat from the liquid extract overhead heat exchanger **62** can be recovered and used elsewhere, such as pre-heating desired process streams, or a coolant can be used to lower the temperature of the liquid extract overhead stream **58**.

[0029] The pressure in the liquid extract overhead stream **58** is controlled with a liquid extract overhead pressure regulator **64** such that the vapors in the high pressure extract overhead stream **52** are at a temperature above the extract reboiler temperature when condensed in the extract process reboiler **56**. The temperature of the liquid extract overhead stream **58** decreases as the pressure is reduced at the extract overhead pressure regulator **64**, and the final temperature after the pressure drop is equal to or lower than the temperature in the extract overhead receiver **44**. In an exemplary embodiment with toluene as the desorbent and a pressure in the extract overhead receiver **44** at 100 kPa, the temperature of the liquid extract overhead stream **58** is lowered to a point below 110 °C by: the (1) low pressure extract overhead heater **48**; (2) the liquid extract overhead heat

exchanger **62**; and (3) the pressure drop at the liquid extract overhead pressure regulator **64**. Liquids from the liquid extract overhead stream **58** are then added to the extract overhead receiver **44**.

[0030] The liquid extract overhead stream **58** flows through the extract overhead receiver **44** and is split into an extract reflux stream **66** and a desorbent stream **38**. The extract reflux stream **66** is added to the extract fractionator **40** to aid in controlling distillation, and the desorbent stream **38** is added back to the adsorbent chamber **34** for re-use as the desorbent. In this manner, the desired xylene isomer is recovered free of desorbent in the desired xylene isomer stream **24**, and the desorbent is recovered and re-used. Much of the heat needed to evaporate and lift the desorbent into the low pressure extract overhead stream **46** is provided by the extract compressor **50** during the pressurization of the low pressure extract overhead stream **46**. In many embodiments, the extract compressor **50** runs on electricity using a motor, so the amount of fuel used in the extract utility reboiler **60** is significantly reduced and replaced by electricity to power the extract compressor **50**. The process of pressurizing the overheads and condensing them to heat the reboiler is one type of heat pump operation.

[0031] The mixed raffinate stream **70** includes raffinate xylene isomers as well as excess desorbent. The extract stream **36** includes the desired xylene isomer and excess desorbent, and the different xylene isomers have similar physical properties. The raffinate xylene isomers can be separated from the desorbent using equipment and operations very similar to that described above for separating the desired xylene isomer and the desorbent, because the compounds being separated are very similar in nature. Therefore, the equipment, streams, and operating conditions are essentially the same, except for being associated with the mixed raffinate stream **70** instead of the extract stream **36**. In various embodiments, the isomer recovery unit **22** can include the fractionation methods and systems described herein for either the extract stream **36** or the mixed raffinate stream **70**, or for both, as desired.

[0032] In an exemplary embodiment, the equipment for separating the components of the mixed raffinate stream **70** are labeled as indicated below. The terminology is the same as for the extract stream **36**, except the word “extract” is replaced with the word

“raffinate.” The raffinate fractionator **72** has a raffinate process reboiler **88** and a raffinate overhead receiver **76**, where the different components of the raffinate fractionator **72** can be combined in different ways in alternate embodiments. The low pressure raffinate overhead stream **78** exits the top of the raffinate fractionator **72**, passes through the raffinate overhead receiver **76** and a low pressure raffinate overhead heater **80**, and flows to a raffinate compressor **82** to produce a high pressure raffinate overhead stream **84**. A high pressure raffinate overhead pressure regulator **86** prevents over pressurization in the high pressure raffinate overhead stream **84**, and the high pressure raffinate overhead stream **84** is coupled to the raffinate process reboiler **88**. A liquid raffinate overhead stream **90** flows out of the raffinate process reboiler **88**. The raffinate fractionator **72** has a raffinate utility reboiler **92** for additional heating, as needed, and the raffinate process reboiler **88** and the raffinate utility reboiler **92** are configured to heat a raffinate column bottoms **74**, either individually or together. The liquids in the liquid raffinate overhead stream **90** are cooled in a liquid raffinate overhead heat exchanger **94** and flow to a liquid raffinate overhead pressure regulator **96**. The liquid raffinate overhead stream **90** flows through the raffinate overhead receiver **76**, and is split into a raffinate reflux stream **98** and the desorbent stream **38**, which flows to the raffinate fractionator **72** and the adsorbent chamber **34**, respectively.

SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

[0033] While the following is described in conjunction with specific embodiments, it will be understood that this description is intended to illustrate and not limit the scope of the preceding description and the appended claims.

[0034] A first embodiment of the invention is a method for producing a desired xylene isomer, the method comprising the steps of absorbing the desired xylene isomer from a mixed xylene stream in an adsorbent chamber; desorbing the desired xylene isomer with a desorbent to produce an extract stream, wherein the extract stream comprises the desired xylene isomer and the desorbent, and wherein the desorbent has a desorbent boiling point lower than a desired xylene isomer boiling point; fractionating the extract stream in an extract fractionator to produce a low pressure extract overhead stream, wherein the low pressure extract overhead stream comprises the desorbent in the gaseous state, and wherein the extract fractionator comprises an extract process reboiler; pressurizing the low

pressure extract overhead stream to produce a high pressure extract overhead stream, wherein pressurizing the low pressure extract overhead stream produces a high pressure extract overhead stream temperature above an extract reboiler temperature; and condensing the high pressure extract overhead stream in the extract process reboiler to produce a liquid extract overhead stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph further comprising heating the low pressure extract overhead stream with the liquid extract overhead stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph further comprising controlling a pressure of the liquid extract overhead stream with a liquid extract overhead pressure regulator. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph wherein pressuring the low pressure extract overhead stream further comprises pressurizing the low pressure extract overhead stream with an extract compressor. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph further comprising adding the liquid extract overhead stream to the adsorbent chamber. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph wherein desorbing the desired xylene isomer with the desorbent further comprises desorbing the desired xylene isomer with the desorbent to produce a mixed raffinate stream comprising a raffinate xylene isomer and the desorbent, and wherein the desorbent boiling point is lower than a raffinate xylene isomer boiling point, the method further comprising fractionating the mixed raffinate stream in a raffinate fractionator to produce a low pressure raffinate overhead stream and an raffinate xylene isomer stream, wherein the low pressure raffinate overhead stream comprises the desorbent in the gaseous state, and wherein the raffinate fractionator comprises a raffinate process reboiler; pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream to produce a high pressure raffinate overhead stream, wherein pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream produces a high pressure raffinate overhead stream temperature above a raffinate reboiler temperature; and

condensing the high pressure raffinate overhead stream in the raffinate process reboiler to produce a liquid raffinate overhead stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph further comprising fractionating a feed stream in a feed fractionator to produce the mixed xylene stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior
5 embodiments in this paragraph up through the first embodiment in this paragraph further comprising isomerizing the raffinate xylene isomer stream in an isomerization unit to produce an isomerized stream; and feeding the isomerized stream to the feed fractionator.

[0035] A second embodiment of the invention is a method for producing a desired
10 xylene isomer, the method comprising the steps of fractionating a mixed raffinate stream in a raffinate fractionator to produce a low pressure raffinate overhead stream and an raffinate xylene isomer stream, wherein the low pressure raffinate overhead stream comprises a desorbent in the gaseous state, wherein the raffinate fractionator comprises a raffinate process reboiler, and wherein the raffinate xylene isomer stream comprises
15 raffinate xylene isomers different than the desired xylene isomer; pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream to produce a high pressure raffinate overhead stream, wherein pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream produces a temperature of the high pressure raffinate overhead stream above a raffinate reboiler temperature; condensing the high pressure raffinate overhead stream in the raffinate process reboiler to
20 produce a liquid raffinate overhead stream; and isomerizing the raffinate xylene isomer stream in an isomerization unit to produce the desired xylene isomer. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph further comprising heating the low pressure raffinate overhead stream with the liquid raffinate overhead stream prior to pressurizing the low
25 pressure raffinate overhead stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph further comprising controlling a liquid raffinate overhead stream pressure with a liquid raffinate overhead stream pressure regulator, wherein the liquid raffinate overhead stream pressure is controlled such that the temperature of the high pressure raffinate overhead
30 stream is above the raffinate reboiler temperature. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph further comprising cooling the liquid raffinate overhead stream prior to the

liquid raffinate overhead stream pressure regulator. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph wherein pressuring the low pressure raffinate overhead stream further comprises pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream with a raffinate compressor. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph wherein fractionating the mixed raffinate stream in the raffinate fractionator further comprises Fractionating the mixed raffinate stream in the raffinate fractionator, wherein the raffinate fractionator further comprises a raffinate utility reboiler configured to heat a raffinate column bottoms.

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10 An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph further comprising introducing a mixed xylene stream into an adsorbent chamber to absorb the desired xylene isomer; and desorbing the desired xylene isomer with the desorbent to produce the mixed raffinate stream comprising the raffinate xylene isomers and the desorbent, and wherein the

15 desorbent has a desorbent boiling point lower than a raffinate xylene isomer boiling point; An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph further comprising adding the liquid raffinate overhead stream to the adsorbent chamber. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment

20 in this paragraph further comprising fractionating a feed stream in a feed fractionator to produce the mixed xylene stream. An embodiment of the invention is one, any or all of prior embodiments in this paragraph up through the second embodiment in this paragraph wherein isomerizing the raffinate xylene isomer stream further comprises producing an isomerized stream, wherein the isomerized stream comprises the desired xylene isomer,

25 the method further comprising feeding the isomerized stream to the feed fractionator.

[0036] A third embodiment of the invention is a system for producing a desired xylene isomer comprising an adsorbent chamber suitable for containing a selective adsorbent selective to the desired xylene isomer; an extract fractionator coupled to the adsorbent chamber, wherein the extract fractionator comprises an extract process reboiler and an

30 extract overhead receiver, and wherein the extract process reboiler is configured to heat an extract column bottoms; and an extract compressor coupled to the extract overhead receiver and the extract process reboiler, wherein the extract compressor is configured to

raise the pressure and temperature of a gas between the extract overhead receiver and the extract process reboiler.

[0037] While at least one exemplary embodiment has been presented in the foregoing detailed description, it should be appreciated that a vast number of variations exist. It should also be appreciated that the exemplary embodiment or exemplary embodiments are only examples, and are not intended to limit the scope, applicability, or configuration of the application in any way. Rather, the foregoing detailed description will provide those skilled in the art with a convenient road map for implementing one or more embodiments, it being understood that various changes may be made in the function and arrangement of elements described in an exemplary embodiment without departing from the scope, as set forth in the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A method for producing a desired xylene isomer, the method comprising the steps of:

absorbing the desired xylene isomer from a mixed xylene stream (20) in an adsorbent chamber (34);

desorbing the desired xylene isomer with a desorbent to produce an extract stream (36), wherein the extract stream (36) comprises the desired xylene isomer and the desorbent, and wherein the desorbent has a desorbent boiling point lower than a desired xylene isomer boiling point;

fractionating the extract stream (36) in an extract fractionator (40) to produce a low pressure extract overhead stream (46), wherein the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) comprises the desorbent in the gaseous state, and wherein the extract fractionator (40) comprises an extract process reboiler (56);

pressurizing the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) to produce a high pressure extract overhead stream (52), wherein pressurizing the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) produces a high pressure extract overhead stream temperature above an extract reboiler temperature; and

condensing the high pressure extract overhead stream (52) in the extract process reboiler (56) to produce a liquid extract overhead stream (58).

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

heating the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) with the liquid extract overhead stream (58).

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

controlling a pressure of the liquid extract overhead stream (58) with a liquid extract overhead pressure regulator (64).

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

cooling the liquid extract overhead stream (58) prior to the liquid extract overhead pressure regulator (64).

5. The method of claim 1 wherein pressuring the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) further comprises pressurizing the low pressure extract overhead stream (46) with an extract compressor (50).

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
adding the liquid extract overhead stream (58) to the adsorbent chamber (34).

7. The method of claim 1 wherein desorbing the desired xylene isomer with the desorbent further comprises desorbing the desired xylene isomer with the desorbent to produce a mixed raffinate stream (70) comprising a raffinate xylene isomer and the desorbent, and wherein the desorbent boiling point is lower than a raffinate xylene isomer boiling point, the method further comprising:

fractionating the mixed raffinate stream (70) in a raffinate fractionator (72) to produce a low pressure raffinate overhead stream (78) and a raffinate xylene isomer stream (26), wherein the low pressure raffinate overhead stream (78) comprises the desorbent in the gaseous state, and wherein the raffinate fractionator (72) comprises a raffinate process reboiler (88);

pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream (78) to produce a high pressure raffinate overhead stream (84), wherein pressurizing the low pressure raffinate overhead stream (78) produces a high pressure raffinate overhead stream temperature above a raffinate reboiler temperature; and

condensing the high pressure raffinate overhead stream (84) in the raffinate process reboiler (88) to produce a liquid raffinate overhead stream (90).

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising:

fractionating a feed stream (10) in a feed fractionator (12) to produce the mixed xylene stream (20).

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising:

isomerizing the raffinate xylene isomer stream (26) in an isomerization unit (28) to produce an isomerized stream (32); and

feeding the isomerized stream (32) to the feed fractionator (12).

10. A system for producing a desired xylene isomer comprising:
- an adsorbent chamber (34) suitable for containing a selective adsorbent selective to the desired xylene isomer;
 - an extract fractionator (40) coupled to the adsorbent chamber (34), wherein the extract fractionator (40) comprises an extract process reboiler (56) and an extract overhead receiver (44), and wherein the extract process reboiler (56) is configured to heat an extract column bottoms (42); and
 - an extract compressor (50) coupled to the extract overhead receiver (44) and the extract process reboiler (56), wherein the extract compressor (50) is configured to raise the pressure and temperature of a gas between the extract overhead receiver (44) and the extract process reboiler (56).