

REMOVAL OF ACID GASES FROM A GAS STREAM, WITH CO₂ CAPTURE AND SEQUESTRATION

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application
5 61/297,529 filed January 22, 2010 entitled REMOVAL OF ACID GASES FROM A GAS
STREAM, WITH CO₂ CAPTURE AND SEQUESTRATION, the entirety of which is
incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This section is intended to introduce various aspects of the art, which may be
10 associated with exemplary embodiments of the present disclosure. This discussion is
believed to assist in providing a framework to facilitate a better understanding of particular
aspects of the present disclosure. Accordingly, it should be understood that this section
should be read in this light, and not necessarily as admissions of prior art.

Field of the Invention

15 [0003] The present invention relates to the field of fluid separation. More specifically,
the present invention relates to the removal of sulfurous components from a hydrocarbon
fluid stream, and to the recovery of carbon dioxide associated with the hydrocarbon fluid
stream.

Discussion of Technology

20 [0004] The production of raw natural gas from a reservoir oftentimes carries with it the
incidental production of non-hydrocarbon gases. Such gases may include trace amounts of
helium or nitrogen. Such gases may also include contaminants such as carbon dioxide (CO₂),
or various sulfur-containing compounds. Sulfur containing compounds may include
hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), carbonyl sulfide (COS), carbon disulfide (CS₂), mercaptans, organic
25 sulfides, and thiophenes.

[0005] When H₂S and CO₂ are produced as part of a hydrocarbon gas stream (such as
methane or ethane), the gas stream is sometimes referred to as "sour gas." Sour gas is usually
treated to remove CO₂, H₂S, and other contaminants before it is sent downstream for further
processing or sale. Removal of acid gases creates a "sweetened" hydrocarbon gas stream.
30 The sweetened gas stream may then be used as an environmentally-acceptable fuel, or it may

be chilled into liquefied natural gas, or LNG, for transportation and later industrial or residential use.

[0006] Several processes have been devised to remove contaminants from a hydrocarbon gas stream. One commonly-used approach for treating raw natural gas involves the use of physical solvents. An example of a physical solvent is Selexol[®]. Selexol[®] is a trade name for a gas treating product of Union Carbide, which is a subsidiary of Dow Chemical Company. Selexol[™] solvent is a mixture of dimethyl ethers of polyethylene glycols. An example of one such component is dimethoxy tetraethylene glycol. If Selexol[™] solvent is chilled and then pre-saturated with CO₂, the Selexol[™] solvent will be selective towards H₂S.

[0007] Another approach for treating raw natural gas involves the use of chemical solvents. An example of a chemical solvent is an H₂S-selective amine. H₂S-selective amines include methyl diethanol amine (MDEA), and the Flexsorb[®] family of amines. Flexsorb[®] amines are preferred chemical solvents for selectively removing H₂S from CO₂-containing gas streams. Flexsorb[®] amines take advantage of the relatively fast rate of H₂S absorption compared to CO₂ absorption. The sterically-hindered amine molecule helps to prevent the formation of carbamates.

[0008] Amine-based solvents rely on a chemical reaction with acid gas components in the hydrocarbon gas stream. The reaction process is sometimes referred to as "gas sweetening." Such chemical reactions are generally more effective than physical-based solvents, particularly at feed gas pressures below about 300 psia (2.07 MPa). In this respect, amine-based H₂S removal may be done at low pressure.

[0009] Hybrid solvents have also been used for the removal of acidic components. Hybrid solvents employ a mixture of physical and chemical solvents. An example of a hybrid solvent is Sulfinol[®].

[0010] The use of the above solvents involves optionally chilling the raw natural gas, and then mixing it with a "lean" solvent in a contactor vessel. When the solvent includes a chemical solvent, the contactor vessel may be referred to as an absorber vessel or a contacting tower. In this instance, the chemical solvent absorbs the acidic components. For example, the removal of hydrogen sulfide using a selective amine may be accomplished by contacting the optionally dehydrated and optionally chilled raw natural gas stream with the chemical solvent in an absorber vessel.

[0011] Traditionally, the removal of acid gases using chemical solvents involves counter-currently contacting the raw natural gas stream with the solvent. The raw gas stream is introduced into the bottom section of a contacting tower. At the same time, the solvent solution is directed into a top section of the tower. The tower has trays, packings or other
5 "internals." As the liquid solvent cascades through the internals, it absorbs the undesirable acid gas components, carrying them away through the bottom of the contacting tower as part of a "rich" solvent solution. At the same time, gaseous fluid that is largely depleted of H₂S and/or CO₂ exits at the top of the tower.

[0012] In the above process, the sweetened gas stream contains primarily methane with a
10 smaller amount of carbon dioxide. This "sweet" gas flows out of the top of the contactor or absorber. The treated "sweet" gas can be further processed, such as for liquids recovery, or sold into a pipeline if the CO₂ concentration is less than, for example, about 2% by volume. In addition, the sweetened gas stream may be used as feedstock for a gas-to-liquids process, and then ultimately used to make waxes, butanes, lubricants, glycols and other petroleum-
15 based products.

[0013] As noted, the solvent process also produces a "rich" solvent stream, containing the solvent and acidic components. The rich solvent can be regenerated by stripping the acidic components to make it lean again, so that the solvent may be recycled. The process of regeneration is also sometimes called "desorption," and is employed to separate acid gases
20 from the active solvent of the absorbent liquid. What is left is a concentrated acidic impurities stream comprising sulfur-containing compounds and some carbon dioxide.

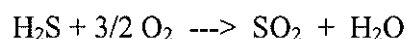
[0014] The use of solvents for a gas separation processes create an issue as to the disposal of the separated sulfurous contaminants. If appreciable levels of sulfur compounds are present in the acid gas, it must be reacted in some way to make a non-hazardous by-product
25 such as elemental sulfur, or sequestered in some manner. In some cases, the concentrated acid gas (consisting primarily of H₂S with some CO₂) is sent to a sulfur recovery unit ("SRU"). The SRU converts the H₂S into benign elemental sulfur. There are many existing plants where the H₂S is converted to sulfur and stored.

[0015] While the sulfur is stored on land, the carbon dioxide gas is oftentimes vented
30 from the absorber vessel to the atmosphere. However, the practice of venting CO₂ is sometimes undesirable. One proposal to minimizing CO₂ emissions is a process called acid gas injection ("AGI"). AGI means that unwanted sour gases are re-injected into a subterranean formation under pressure immediately following acid gas removal.

[0016] Acid gas injection is a relatively new technology that is practiced on a large scale in only a limited number of fields. AGI requires the availability of a suitable underground reservoir coupled with significant compression. CO₂ and H₂S may optionally be injected and sequestered together.

5 [0017] In some instances, injected acid gas is used to create artificial reservoir pressure for enhanced oil recovery operations. This means that the acidic components are used as a miscible enhanced oil recovery (EOR) agent to recover additional oil. This is particularly attractive when the acid gas is primarily made up of carbon dioxide. If the volume and/or concentration of H₂S is too high for a candidate injection reservoir, then the bulk of the H₂S
10 will again need to be converted into elemental sulfur before AGI.

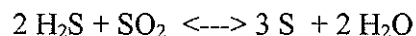
[0018] In any instance, a known type of sulfur recovery process that converts H₂S to elemental sulfur is the Claus process. In a Claus process, one-third of the hydrogen sulfide (and other sulfurous components) is burned with air in a reactor furnace to form SO₂ (and some elemental sulfur). This is an oxidation process performed according to the following
15 reaction:



or



This is a strongly exothermic reaction that generates sulfur dioxide. A substantial amount of
20 nitrogen may enter the process at this point, but does not participate in the chemical reaction. A subsequent reaction takes place from the heating and oxidation, known as a Claus reaction:



[0019] As can be seen, sulfur and water are formed in this reaction. The sulfur and water are delivered to a condenser. Elemental sulfur is released from the condenser as a molten
25 liquid. The molten sulfurous liquid may then be frozen into any number of forms.

[0020] The Claus reaction is equilibrium-limited, which is to say that the reaction does not generally go to completion, though high conversions, i.e., greater than 95%, are possible. The higher the initial H₂S concentration in the acid gas stream, the more efficient the Claus sulfur removal process is. In any instance, some amount of unreacted H₂S and SO₂ remain.
30 These gases are reheated and passed into a catalytic reactor containing alumina or titania catalyst. The catalyst facilitates further reaction between the H₂S and SO₂ to form more elemental sulfur. This sequence of condensing sulfur, reheating gas, and passing it to a

catalytic reactor may be repeated one or two more times to reach a desired level of sulfur recovery.

[0021] The general process for a Claus sulfur recovery operation is shown schematically in **Figure 1**. **Figure 1** shows a known sulfur recovery plant **100**. The sulfur recovery plant
5 **100** operates to convert hydrogen sulfide and other sulfurous components into elemental sulfur. Elemental sulfur is shown being incrementally deposited from the plant **100** at lines **150'**, **150''**, **150'''**.

[0022] To conduct the Claus process, an acid gas stream containing H_2S is directed into the plant **100**. The acid gas stream is shown at line **110**. The acid gas stream **110** is
10 introduced into a reactor furnace **120**, along with a stream of air **115**. There, one-third of the hydrogen sulfide (and other sulfurous components) is burned with the air **115** to form SO_2 (and some elemental sulfur) according to the first reaction set forth above. The reactor furnace **120** operates at pressures around 10 to 15 psig and typically at temperatures above $850^\circ C$.

15 [0023] The reactor furnace **120** works with a waste heat boiler **125** as part of the “thermal section” of the Claus process. The waste heat boiler **125** recovers heat from the reactor **120** so as to generate steam. Sulfur and water vapor are generated according to the second reaction above.

[0024] In **Figure 1**, a combination of sulfur and water is shown leaving the waste heat
20 boiler **125** at line **122**. The sulfur and water in line **122** are then directed into a first condenser **130'**. In the condenser **130'**, elemental sulfur is condensed out of the gas phase. Sulfur is released from the first condenser **130'** in a first sulfur line **150'**. The sulfur in sulfur line **150'** is initially in a molten liquid phase, but converts to a solid phase during cooling in a downstream process.

25 [0025] In experience, the Claus reaction does not convert all H_2S and SO_2 into elemental sulfur. This means that unreacted H_2S and SO_2 remain. To obtain further conversion, the unreacted H_2S and SO_2 (along with CO_2 , N_2 , and H_2O vapor) are released from the first condenser **130'** through an overhead line **132'**. The released gases in overhead line **132'** are heated in reheater **140'** above the sulfur dew point. A heated stream of H_2S , SO_2 , and other
30 gases is released from the reheater **140'** through line **142'**. The heated stream of H_2S and other gases in line **142'** is introduced into a converter, or “reactor” **144'** containing alumina or

titania catalyst. The catalyst facilitates further reaction between the H₂S and SO₂ to form more elemental sulfur.

[0026] The elemental sulfur passes through line 146' into a second condenser 130''. Elemental sulfur is condensed out of the gas phase of line 146' and is released through second sulfur line 150'' as a molten liquid. This sequence of condensing sulfur, reheating gas, and passing it to a catalytic reactor may optionally be repeated one or two more times to reach a desired level of sulfur recovery. In **Figure 1**, a second reheater is seen at 140'', a second stream of heated H₂S and SO₂ is seen at 142'', a second reactor is seen at 144'', and a third condenser is seen at 130'''. The third condenser 130''' condenses out a third sulfur line 150'''.

[0027] Even after passing through the catalytic stages, there may be too much unreacted H₂S and SO₂. Typically, 1 to 3 percent by volume of these gases will remain. This percentage is typically considered too high to incinerate and release into the atmosphere. This remaining sulfurous gas stream is referred to as "tail gas." The tail gas will contain not only unreacted H₂S and SO₂, but may also contain CO₂ and N₂ from the combustion air. The tail gas is shown at line 160 coming out of the third condenser 130'''. Of course, the tail gas 160 may be line 132'' if the second reheater 140'', second reactor 144''; and third condenser 130'' are not used.

[0028] Some governmental entities require a greater than 97% or 98% sulfur recovery efficiency. In order to achieve this level of sulfur removal, the tail gas 160 must be treated. This is done in a tail gas treating unit, or "TGTU." A number of "tail gas" treatment options have been devised for a TGTU.

[0029] **Figure 2** shows a known gas treating and sulfur recovery facility 200, in a schematic arrangement. The facility 200 includes an acid gas removal facility 220 followed by a Claus sulfur recovery unit 230. The facility 200 also includes a tail gas treating unit 240.

[0030] In **Figure 2**, a raw gas stream 210 is first shown entering an acid gas removal facility 220. The gas stream 210 may be, for example, raw natural gas from a hydrocarbon recovery operation. For natural gas treating applications, it is preferred that the gas stream 210 have a pressure of at least 100 psig, and more typically at least 500 psig. While it is generally contemplated that at least a portion of the gas pressure is due to the pressure of the gas stream 210 entering the gas treatment facility 200 from a subsurface reservoir, it should

also be recognized that the pressure may be boosted using one or more compressors (not shown).

[0031] It is also understood that the raw natural gas stream **210** has typically undergone dehydration before entering the acid gas removal facility **220**. This may be done through the use of glycol. It is also desirable to keep the gas stream **210** clean so as to prevent foaming of liquid solvent during the acid gas treatment process in the acid gas removal system **220**. Therefore, the raw natural gas stream **210** is typically passed through an inlet separator and coalescer (not shown) to filter out impurities such as brine and drilling fluids. The separator and coalescer will also remove any condensed hydrocarbons. Some particle filtration may also take place.

[0032] The gas stream **210** contains at least one hydrocarbon gas component, principally methane. In addition, the gas stream **210** contains at least one acid gas. Examples of an acid gas are hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide. A natural gas stream in a particularly "sour" field may have, for example, 10 to 40% H₂S and/or 5 to 10% CO₂ along with methane and possibly heavier hydrocarbon components such as ethane or propane.

[0033] The acid gas removal facility **220** operates to separate out the acid gas components from the hydrocarbon gases. This may be done, for example, through the various solvent reaction processes discussed above. Alternatively, a cryogenic separation process may be employed, such as the use of the Controlled Freeze Zone™ (CFZ) process created and used by ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company. The CFZ™ process takes advantage of the propensity of carbon dioxide to form solid particles by allowing frozen CO₂ and H₂S particles to form within an open portion of a distillation tower, and then capturing the particles on a melt tray. As a result, a clean methane stream (along with any nitrogen or helium present in the raw gas) is generated at the top of the tower, while a cold liquid CO₂/H₂S stream is generated at the bottom of the tower. Certain aspects of the CFZ™ process and associated equipment are described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,533,372; U.S. Pat. No. 4,923,493; U.S. Pat. No. 5,062,270; U.S. Pat. No. 5,120,338; and U.S. Pat. No. 6,053,007.

[0034] In **Figure 2**, a sweetened gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **220** overhead. This is shown at line **222**. In addition, an acid gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **220** as a bottoms stream. This is shown at line **224**. The acid gas stream in line **224** contains primarily carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide. The acid gas stream enters a Claus sulfur recovery facility **230**. The Claus sulfur recovery facility **230** serves as a SRU.

[0035] As discussed above in connection with **Figure 1**, the Claus sulfur recovery facility **230** operates to break sulfurous components in the acid gas stream down into elemental sulfur. In **Figure 2**, an elemental sulfur stream is shown exiting the Claus SRU **230** at **232**. A tail gas stream also exits the Claus SRU **230**, through line **234**.

5 [0036] The tail gas stream **234** is directed to a TGTU. The TGTU is shown at **240**. In the TGTU, the tail gas stream **234** is "cleaned." In the arrangement of **Figure 2**, hydrogen sulfide is directed from the TGTU **240** and recycled back to the front end of the Claus sulfur recovery unit **230**. This is seen at line **242**. The remaining products, consisting primarily of nitrogen and carbon dioxide are directed to an incinerator **250** through line **244**. The traces of
10 H₂S are burned and vented to the atmosphere along with nitrogen and carbon dioxide through vent line **252**.

[0037] As noted, different tail gas treatment options have been devised for a TGTU. For example, Shell employs a Shell Claus Offgas Treating (SCOT) process. There, the tail gas is hydrogenated to convert the SO₂ and mercaptans in the tail gas stream to H₂S. This is done
15 through the use of a reducing gas generator (RGG) and subsequent cobalt-molybdenum (Co-Mo) catalytic bed. This process is shown and described in further detail below in connection with **Figure 3A**.

[0038] The output of the SCOT process is H₂S with some amount of CO₂, which is recycled back to the Claus sulfur recovery unit **230**. However, in the SCOT process, most
20 CO₂ necessarily travels through the TGTU **240** and passes to the incinerator **250** and is vented to the atmosphere along with N₂. A vent line is again shown at **252**.

[0039] It is desirable to provide an improved tail gas treating unit that reduces or minimizes the amount of CO₂ vented to the atmosphere. It is further desirable to substantially reduce CO₂ emissions from a tail gas treating unit by capturing increased levels
25 of CO₂ from a tail gas treating unit, and injecting it into a reservoir, optionally for enhanced oil recovery operations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0040] A gas processing facility for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream is first provided. The hydrocarbon gas stream comprises sulfurous components and carbon dioxide.
30 In various embodiments, the gas processing facility captures CO₂ and pressurizes it for injection into a subsurface reservoir.

[0041] The gas processing facility includes an acid gas removal facility. The acid gas removal facility separates the hydrocarbon gas stream into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide.

5 [0042] The gas processing facility also includes a Claus sulfur recovery unit. The Claus sulfur recovery unit receives the acid gas stream, and separates the first acid gas stream into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities.

[0043] The gas processing facility further includes a tail gas treating unit. The tail gas treating unit receives the tail gas, and separates the tail gas into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel.
10 Preferably, the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components. In this way, a majority of the hydrogen sulfide and the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel as a rich solvent stream.

[0044] In one aspect, the amine comprises diethanol amine (DEA), di-isopropanol amine
15 (DIPA), monoethanol (MEA), or combinations thereof. In another aspect, the amine comprises a methyl diethanol amine (MDEA). The MDEA is activated to facilitate CO₂ absorption. For example, the amine may be activated with piperazine to reduce H₂S levels while still releasing CO₂.

[0045] The gas processing facility may further include an incinerator. The incinerator
20 receives the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel for burning and venting. Ideally, the overhead by-products stream contains very little CO₂.

[0046] In addition, the gas processing facility includes a compressor station. The compressor station receives the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel, and provides pressure to the second acid gas stream for injection into a subsurface reservoir. In
25 one aspect, a plurality of acid gas injection wells is provided for transmitting the second acid gas stream from the compressor station to the subsurface reservoir. In one instance, the overhead gas stream is used for enhanced oil recovery operations.

[0047] In one embodiment of the gas processing facility, a portion of the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is also taken to the compressor station and placed
30 under pressure. The portion of the acid gas stream is then injected into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

[0048] Preferably, the gas processing facility also includes an acid gas enrichment facility. The acid gas enrichment facility receives the acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separates the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream. In this instance, the acid gas stream received by the Claus sulfur recovery unit is the H₂S-rich acid gas stream. Further, the overhead CO₂-rich stream is directed from the acid gas enrichment facility to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

[0049] A method for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream is also provided. The method allows for the capture of additional CO₂. The CO₂ is then injected into a subsurface reservoir. The method is carried out at a gas processing facility.

[0050] The method first includes separating the hydrocarbon gas stream at an acid gas removal facility. The hydrocarbon gas stream comprises sulfurous components and carbon dioxide. The hydrocarbon gas stream is separated into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide.

[0051] The method also includes receiving the acid gas stream at a Claus sulfur recovery unit. The acid gas stream is separated into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities.

[0052] The method further includes receiving the tail gas at a tail gas treating unit. The tail gas is separated into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel. Preferably, the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that a majority of the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel along with sulfurous components as a rich solvent stream.

[0053] The method next includes providing pressure to the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel at a compressor station. Then, the method provides for injecting the second acid gas stream into a subsurface reservoir.

[0054] In one aspect, a portion of the acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir. The portion of the first acid gas stream is injected along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

[0055] Optionally, the method also comprises providing a plurality of acid gas injection wells. The plurality of acid gas injection wells transmits the acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel in the tail gas treating unit to the subsurface reservoir. This may be for sequestration or for enhanced oil recovery operations in the subsurface reservoir.

5 [0056] In one embodiment, the method also includes warming the rich solvent stream in a heat exchanger before it enters the regenerator vessel, and directing the warmed rich solvent stream into the regenerator vessel.

[0057] In another embodiment, the method further comprises separating residual amine and condensed water from carbon dioxide and sulfurous components in the acid gas stream in
10 a condenser vessel. The residual amine and condensed water are directed back to the regenerator vessel. In this embodiment, the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel is taken through the condenser vessel before CO₂ and H₂S are delivered to the compressor station.

[0058] Preferably, the method further comprises incinerating the overhead by-products
15 stream from the absorber vessel. The method then includes venting the incinerated by-products stream into the atmosphere. Ideally, the by-products stream contains little CO₂ so that less CO₂ is vented to the atmosphere than in known processes. It is understood that the incinerator generates CO₂ as well.

[0059] In one arrangement, the gas processing facility further comprises an acid gas
20 enrichment facility for receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream. In this arrangement, the method may further comprise:

receiving the H₂S-rich acid gas stream as the acid gas stream at the Claus
sulfur recovery unit;
25 delivering the overhead CO₂-rich stream to the compressor station;
providing pressure to the overhead CO₂-rich stream at the compressor station;
and
injecting the overhead CO₂-rich stream into the subsurface reservoir along
with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating
30 unit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0060] So that the manner in which the present invention can be better understood, certain illustrations and/or flow charts are appended hereto. It is to be noted, however, that the drawings illustrate only selected embodiments of the inventions and are therefore not to
5 be considered limiting of scope, for the inventions may admit to other equally effective embodiments and applications.

[0061] Figure 1 is a schematic view of a gas processing facility for carrying out a sulfur removal process in accordance with a Claus reaction. Such a facility is known in the art of fluid component separation.

10 [0062] Figure 2 is a schematic view of a known gas processing facility for removing acid gas components from a raw natural gas stream. The facility includes an acid gas removal facility, a Claus sulfur recovery facility, a tail gas treating unit, and an incinerator.

[0063] Figure 3A is a schematic view of a tail gas treating unit as known in the gas processing industry.

15 [0064] Figure 3B is a schematic view of a modified tail gas treating unit of the present invention, in one embodiment.

[0065] Figure 4 is a schematic view of a gas processing facility of the present invention, in one embodiment. Here, a portion of the acid gas removed from the acid gas removal facility is sent directly to a compressor station for acid gas injection.

20 [0066] Figure 5A is a schematic view of a known gas processing facility for the removal of acid gases. Here, acid gas enrichment is provided before H_2S is passed to a Claus sulfur recovery unit, with carbon dioxide being diverted around the Claus sulfur recovery unit and directed into an incinerator.

[0067] Figure 5B is a schematic view of a gas processing facility for the removal of acid
25 gases, in a modified embodiment. Here, acid gas enrichment is again provided before H_2S is passed to a Claus sulfur recovery unit, but the carbon dioxide is now sent to the compressor station for acid gas injection.

[0068] Figure 6 provides a flow chart demonstrating steps for carrying out a method for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream, in one embodiment. The hydrocarbon gas stream

comprises sulfurous components and carbon dioxide, and the method is carried out at a gas processing facility such as the facilities of Figure 4 or Figure 5B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS

Definitions

5 [0069] As used herein, the term “natural gas” refers to a multi-component gas obtained from a crude oil well (associated gas) or from a subterranean gas-bearing formation (non-associated gas). The composition and pressure of natural gas can vary significantly. A typical natural gas stream contains methane (C_1) as a significant component. The natural gas stream may also contain ethane (C_2), higher molecular weight hydrocarbons, and one or more acid
10 gases. The natural gas may also contain minor amounts of contaminants such as water, nitrogen, iron sulfide and wax.

[0070] As used herein, the term “acid gas” means any gas that dissolves in water producing an acidic solution. Nonlimiting examples of acid gases include hydrogen sulfide (H_2S), carbon dioxide (CO_2), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), carbon disulfide (CS_2), carbonyl sulfide
15 (COS), mercaptans, or mixtures thereof.

[0071] “Flue gas” means any gas stream generated as a by-product of hydrocarbon combustion.

[0072] “Compressor” refers to a device for compressing a gaseous fluid, including gas-vapor mixtures or exhaust gases, and includes pumps, compressor turbines, reciprocating
20 compressors, piston compressors, rotary vane or screw compressors, and devices and combinations capable of compressing a gas.

[0073] “Enhanced oil recovery” or “EOR” refers to the processes for enhancing the recovery of hydrocarbons from subterranean reservoirs. Techniques for improving displacement efficiency or sweep efficiency may be used for the exploitation of an oil or gas
25 field by introducing displacing fluids or gas into injection wells to drive hydrocarbons through the reservoir to producing wells.

[0074] As used herein, the terms “catalytic” or “catalyst” relate to a material which under certain conditions of temperature and/or pressure increases the rate of specific chemical reactions or acts as a chemisorbent for specific components of a feed stream.

[0075] As used herein, the term “fluid” refers to gases, liquids, and combinations of gases and liquids, as well as to combinations of gases and solids, and combinations of liquids and solids.

5 [0076] “Flashing” means depressurizing a liquid through an expansion device or vessel with the conversion of a portion of the liquid to the vapor phase.

[0077] As used herein, “lean” and “rich,” with respect to the absorbent liquid removal of a selected gas component from a gas stream, are relative, merely implying, respectively, a lesser or greater degree or extent of loading or content of the selected gas component, and do not necessarily indicate or require, respectively, either that the absorbent liquid is totally
10 devoid of the selected gaseous component, or that it is incapable of absorbing more of the selected gas component. In fact, it is preferred, as will be evident hereinafter, that the so called “rich” absorbent liquid produced in contactor retains residual absorptive capacity. Conversely, a “lean” absorbent liquid will be understood to be capable of additional absorption, and may retain a minor concentration of the gas component being removed.

15 [0078] “Sour gas” means a gas containing undesirable quantities of acid gas, e.g., 55 parts-per-million by volume (ppmv) or more, or 500 ppmv, or 5 percent by volume or more, or 15 percent by volume or more. At least one example of a “sour gas” is a gas having from about 2 percent by volume or more to about 7 percent by volume or more of acid gas.

[0079] The term “industrial plant” refers to any plant that generates a gas stream
20 containing at least one hydrocarbon or an acid gas. One nonlimiting example is a coal-powered electrical generation plant. Another example is a cement plant that emits CO₂ at low pressures.

[0080] The term “liquid solvent” means a fluid in substantially liquid phase that preferentially absorbs acid gases, thereby removing or “scrubbing” at least a portion of the
25 acid gas components from a gas stream. The gas stream may be a hydrocarbon gas stream or other gas stream, such as a gas stream having hydrogen sulfide.

[0081] “Sweetened gas stream” refers to a fluid stream in a substantially gaseous phase that has had at least a portion of acid gas components removed.

[0082] As used herein, the term “hydrocarbon” refers to an organic compound that
30 includes primarily, if not exclusively, the elements hydrogen and carbon. Hydrocarbons generally fall into two classes: aliphatic, or straight chain hydrocarbons, and cyclic, or closed ring, hydrocarbons including cyclic terpenes. Examples of hydrocarbon-containing materials

include any form of natural gas, oil, coal, and bitumen that can be used as a fuel or upgraded into a fuel.

[0083] As used herein, the term “hydrocarbon fluids” refers to a hydrocarbon or mixtures of hydrocarbons that are gases or liquids. For example, hydrocarbon fluids may include a hydrocarbon or mixtures of hydrocarbons that are gases or liquids at formation conditions, at processing conditions or at ambient conditions (15° C and 1 atm pressure). Hydrocarbon fluids may include, for example, oil, natural gas, coal bed methane, shale oil, pyrolysis oil, pyrolysis gas, a pyrolysis product of coal, and other hydrocarbons that are in a gaseous or liquid state.

10 [0084] As used herein, the term “subsurface” refers to geologic strata occurring below the earth’s surface.

Description of Specific Embodiments

[0085] Figure 3A provides a schematic view of a tail gas treating unit **300A**, as known in the gas processing industry. The tail gas treating unit (TGTU) **300A** is generally in accordance with the Shell Claus Offgas Treating (SCOT) process mentioned above. The TGTU **300A** receives a tail gas stream **310**. The TGTU **300A** also receives fuel gas through line **312**, and a sub-stoichiometric air flow through line **314**.

[0086] The tail gas stream **310**, the fuel gas **312** and the air flow **314** are introduced into a reducing gas generator (RGG) **320**. The RGG **320** typically does a sub-stoichiometric combustion of fuel gas in order to generate the hydrogen needed for the reduction of SO₂ and mercaptans to H₂S. The RGG **320** partially oxidizes the hydrocarbon components of the fuel gas to generate carbon monoxide and hydrogen. The hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide exit the RGG **320** through line **322**, and are directed through a catalytic bed. Preferably, the catalytic bed **330** is a cobalt-molybdenum (Co-Mo) catalytic bed. The catalytic bed **330** facilitates the hydrogenation reactions. Together, the RGG **320** and the catalytic bed **330** hydrogenate the tail gas in the tail gas stream **310** to convert the SO₂ and mercaptans in the tail gas stream **310** to H₂S.

[0087] It is noted that the RGG **320** introduces more nitrogen, CO₂, and water vapor into the process. In addition, carbon monoxide is generated in the RGG **320**. The carbon monoxide reacts with H₂O on the sulfided Co-Mo catalyst bed **330** to generate more hydrogen and CO₂ via a known water-gas shift reaction. The water-gas shift reaction is as follows:



The presence of additional hydrogen assists in the conversion of SO_2 to H_2S and water vapor.

[0088] An H_2S -containing gaseous stream is released from the catalyst bed **330** through line **332**. The H_2S stream is preferably cooled through a heat exchanger **334**. A cooled H_2S -containing aqueous stream leaves the heat exchanger **334** as stream **336**. The cooled H_2S -containing aqueous stream **336** then enters a quench tower **340**.

[0089] The quench tower **340** operates primarily to remove water generated by the Claus reaction. Much of the excess water vapor is condensed and removed through line **344** as quench water. The quench water is passed through a pump **346**, followed by a heat exchanger **348**. The heat exchanger **348** acts to cool the quench water. Part of the quench water from line **344**, now cooled, is reintroduced into the quench tower **340** near the top of the tower **340**. The remaining water from line **344** is removed through a bleed-off line **347**. Excess sour water may be removed through line bleed-off line **347** and used elsewhere in the tail gas treating unit **300A** for cooling or, ideally, for agricultural purposes.

[0090] The quench tower **340** releases a cooled tail gas stream. This is shown at line **342**. Here, the tail gas stream **342** comprises H_2S , N_2 , CO_2 , CO , and water vapor. To remove the H_2S , the cooled tail gas stream in line **342** is then contacted with an amine in an absorber **350**.

[0091] The absorber **350** uses an H_2S -selective amine. The amine is usually methyl diethanol amine (MDEA) or an amine from the Flexsorb[®] family of amines discussed above. The amine captures the great majority of the H_2S , along with some level of CO_2 . The amine originates at a solvent tank (not shown) proximate the absorber **350**. Movement of the amine into the absorber **350** is aided by a pump that moves the amine into the absorber **350** under suitable pressure. The pump may, for example, boost pressure of the amine to 1,000 psig or higher.

[0092] The absorber **350** operates on the basis of a counter-current flow scheme. In this respect, acid gases are directed from line **342** and through the absorber **350** in one direction, while chemical solvent is directed through the absorber **350** in the opposite direction. The chemical solvent is introduced into the absorber **350** through line **359**. As the two fluid materials interact, the downflowing solvent absorbs H_2S from the upflowing sour gas to produce a "rich" solvent, that is, amine with the absorbed H_2S and some incidental CO_2 . The rich solvent passes through a bottom line **354**.

[0093] The rich solvent in bottom line 354 is preferably taken through a booster pump 356. The rich solvent is then heat-exchanged through a heat exchanger 380. Heat exchanging is carried out with a regenerated solvent line 364 from a regenerator vessel 360. This allows the rich solvent to be pre-heated. The rich solvent then moves forward through
5 line 357 into the regenerator vessel 360.

[0094] In the regenerator vessel 360, the amine is regenerated. This means that the amine is separated from the hydrogen sulfide in line 357 for re-use. The regenerator vessel 360 is a large-diameter vessel that operates at a pressure of about 15 to 25 psig. The regenerator vessel 360 defines a stripper portion typically comprising trays, packings or other internals
10 (not shown) above a reboiler. A heat source 368 is provided to the reboiler to generate vapor traffic within the regenerator vessel 360. The reboiler typically uses steam as its heat source to boil off water and H₂S from the amine.

[0095] The regenerator vessel 360 allows the rich solvent from line 357 to cascade down through trays or other internals. A portion of the regenerated amine is taken through bottom
15 line 367. From there, the regenerated amine passes through a small heat exchanger as the heat source 368 for reheating, and is then reintroduced to the regenerator vessel 360.

[0096] However, a majority of the solvent is dropped through a bottom amine line 364. The bottom amine line 364 contains a lean solvent stream, which is at a temperature of about 265° F. The bottom amine line 364 carries lean amine through a booster pump 366. From
20 there, the warm amine passes through the heat exchanger 380 mentioned above, where it warms the rich solvent from line 354. At the same time, thermal contact with the rich solvent from line 354 serves to partially cool the lean amine in bottom amine line 364. The cooled amine may be reheated through a heat exchanger 358. The cooled amine is then carried to the top of the absorber vessel 350 through line 359.

[0097] The absorber vessel 350 releases an overhead by-products line 352. The gas in the overhead by-products line 352 again comprises N₂, water vapor, and some of the CO₂. These overhead by-products in line 352 are delivered to a release line 390. Release line 390 takes the overhead by-products to an incinerator. Thus, line 390 is comparable to line 244 from **Figure 2**, which shows gases being released from the tail gas treating unit 240 and
30 directed to an incinerator 250. A valve 392 may be employed to control the flow of gases to the incinerator 250.

[0098] It is noted that the by-products in line 352 may and almost certainly will contain some H₂S. H₂S that slips past the absorption step provided by the absorber vessel 350 usually goes to the incinerator with the CO₂ and other gases, and eventually counts against the allowable SO₂ emission limit. (Those of ordinary skill in the art will know that burning H₂S creates SO₂.) It is, however, optional, to bypass the incinerator, particularly during start-up and catalyst sulfiding procedures, and to route the gases in line 352 back to the RGG 320, as indicated by dashed line 394. Valve 396 is provided to control the bypass flow through line 394. When the valve 396 is open, the by-products from the absorber vessel 350 (from line 352 and then line 394) is merged with the tail gas stream 310.

10 [0099] Returning to the regenerator vessel 360, the regenerator vessel 360 also has an overhead line 362. The overhead line 362 releases the hydrogen sulfide (and incidental CO₂) that flashes from the amine in the regenerator vessel 360. The sour gas in line 362 will inevitably contain trace amounts of amine and water. Therefore, the H₂S-rich sour gas is preferably carried through overhead line 362 to a heat exchanger 363 where it is cooled, and
15 then dropped to a small condensing vessel 370. The heat exchanger 363 serves to cool the H₂S-rich sour gas in overhead line 362. The heat exchanger 363 may be an air fan cooler or may be a heat exchanger using fresh water or sea water. Cooling the H₂S-rich sour gas in line 362 serves to knock out water. This helps to minimize the required water make-up. Given the presence of acid gas and free water, this portion of the system is usually clad with
20 high-alloy metal.

[0100] The condensing vessel 370 produces an H₂S-rich acid gas. The H₂S-rich acid gas is released from the condensing vessel 370 through overhead line 372. In the known TGTU 300A, the H₂S-rich acid gas is recycled back to the front of the Claus sulfur recovery unit. This is represented more fully at line 242 in Figure 2, where the H₂S-rich acid gas is
25 delivered back to the Claus SRU 230.

[0101] Water and amine drop from the condensing vessel 370 through bottom line 374. Together, the water and amine are taken through a pressure booster 376. The water and amine are reintroduced into the top of the regenerator vessel 360. Some of the water is re-vaporized, but most water travels down the regenerator vessel 360 with the lean amine, and is
30 thus recycled.

[0102] As noted above, a tail gas treating unit such as unit 300A of Figure 3 may release a large amount of CO₂. The CO₂ is released through the overhead by-products line 352 from the absorber vessel 350. A lesser amount of CO₂ is released with the H₂S-rich acid gas

stream in overhead line **372**. It is desirable to reduce CO₂ emissions from a tail gas treating unit, such as unit **300A**. However, it would be costly to capture the carbon dioxide from the treated tail gas stream **390** before incineration, as it would typically involve a second solvent-based capture system, including at least one contactor vessel and a regenerator tower.

5 [0103] To address this shortcoming in the technology, it is proposed herein to employ a more reactive solvent in a TGTU, such as TGTU **300A**. As noted above, existing procedures for a TGTU usually employ methyl diethanol amine (MDEA) or an amine from the Flexsorb[®] family of chemical solvents discussed above. These amines are heavily H₂S-selective. Such amines capture the great majority of the H₂S, but only a small amount of CO₂. Therefore, it
10 is proposed herein that the H₂S-selective solvent be replaced with a more reactive solvent. A more reactive solvent will not only absorb H₂S molecules, but will also capture a substantial percentage of carbon dioxide.

[0104] More reactive solvents include:

- diethanol amine (DEA);
- 15 — di-isopropanol amine (DIPA); and
- monoethanol (MEA).

These are considered primary or secondary amines.

[0105] Another amine that would be effective in capturing CO₂ along with H₂S molecules is an activated MDEA. This means that a relatively small amount of an activator is added to
20 an MDEA absorber to aid in CO₂ absorption. Such an activator may be, for example, piperazine. Piperazine is a type of amine that, if added to MDEA, facilitates the pick-up of CO₂.

[0106] Any of these chemical solvents is capable of picking up most of the CO₂, along with virtually all of the H₂S, while slipping the nitrogen and any unreacted hydrogen to the
25 incinerator. Any of these solvents would also allow water vapor in the absorber (such as absorber **350** in **Figure 3A**) to be delivered to the incinerator. Most importantly, little, if any, CO₂ passes to the overhead by-products line **352** from the absorber vessel **350**.

[0107] After absorbing both H₂S and CO₂, the rich solvent stream **354** is then regenerated. This produces an acidic gas comprised of solvent plus H₂S and CO₂, but
30 substantially free of nitrogen and other light gases. The absence of nitrogen and other light gases (such as helium) makes a later acid gas injection (AGI) operation easier because it is easier to condense the acid gas into a dense phase, that is, a substantially liquid phase.

Hydrostatic head of the condensed acid gas, now substantially in liquid phase, may be used to advantage in the wellbores to help push it into the reservoir. The acid gas stream being injected into a reservoir is suitable for use for Enhanced Oil Recovery since it is free of the light gases and nitrogen that typically require much higher pressures to be miscible with reservoir oil.

[0108] Removal of carbon dioxide from the overhead by-products line 352 not only provides a source of fluid for an EOR operation and not only reduces the emission of CO₂ into the atmosphere, but also reduces the load on the incinerator 250. This means that the incinerator 250 consumes less fuel gas, which in turn reduces the amount of CO₂ the incinerator 250 generates via combustion.

[0109] As an alternative means of capturing CO₂ to avoid venting the CO₂ into the atmosphere, and as a further improvement to the tail gas treating unit 300A, the incinerator 250 may use a catalytic incineration process. This is as opposed to a fuel gas combustion process. A catalytic incineration process requires lower temperatures to combust the H₂S along with any residual hydrocarbons, such as from an acid gas enrichment unit. Some preheating of the overhead by-products stream 244 is done, air is added, and the mixture is flowed to a catalyst bed. The catalyst facilitates oxidation of hydrocarbons to CO₂, and water vapor and H₂S to SO₂. Those of ordinary skill in the art will understand that a catalytic incineration system would preferably be designed to handle "upsets" from the TGTU that may result in temporary increases in the level of H₂S flowing to it.

[0110] The above design changes to a tail gas treating unit may be implemented during the design phase of a new gas treating facility. However, and beneficially, the above design changes can be implemented by retrofitting an existing plant. For example, an existing Claus tail gas treating unit may be modified by changing out the legacy solvent or by adding an activator to the legacy solvent. In this instance, overhead sour gas line 372 now comprises both H₂S and CO₂ gases. As discussed further in connection with **Figure 4**, below, these gases may then be condensed, compressed, and injected into a subsurface reservoir.

[0111] Additional equipment may also be necessary to supplement the regeneration capacity of the solvent system. This is because additional heat and, possibly, higher solvent circulation rate, may be necessary to regenerate the solvent in line 357 that is carrying the additional CO₂ (along with the baseline H₂S). Solvents that tend to be more reactive with CO₂ will generally have a higher heat of reaction, which means that the temperature in the rich amine solution (line 354) is now increased. The temperature in the top of the absorber

vessel **350** is typically about 100° F. By the time counter-current mixing has finished in the absorber vessel **350**, the temperature of the rich amine solution at the bottom of the absorber vessel **350** is up to about 160° F. This additional heat of reaction must also be added back in the regeneration process.

5 [0112] **Figure 3B** presents a schematic view of a modified tail gas treating unit **300B** of the present invention, in one embodiment. The TGTU **300B** is similar to the TGTU **300A** of **Figure 3A**. In this respect, tail gas treating unit **300B** of **Figure 3B** also has a reducing gas generator (RGG) **320** and a catalytic bed **330**. Together, the RGG **320** and the catalytic bed **330** hydrogenate the tail gas in the tail gas stream **310** to facilitate a hydrogenation reaction
10 that converts SO₂ and mercaptans in the tail gas stream **310** to H₂S. The tail gas treating unit **300B** also has an absorber vessel **340** and a solvent regenerator vessel **350**. However, a more CO₂-selective amine solvent is used in the absorber vessel **340**, and additional equipment has been added.

[0113] It can be seen that a dedicated heater **302** is provided along rich solvent line **357**
15 after the heat exchanger **380**. The dedicated heater **302** pre-heats the rich solvent in line **357** before it enters the regenerator vessel **360**. Pre-heating the rich solvent enables at least a portion of the H₂S and CO₂ to enter the gas phase. The pre-heated rich solvent then travels through line **304**. The pre-heated rich solvent in line **304** is directed into the top of the regenerator **360**.

20 [0114] Ultimately, the acid gas components from overhead line **362** are released from condensing vessel **370** into overhead gas line **372**. The acid gases are then passed through a compressor station and injected into a subsurface reservoir.

[0115] It is understood that in this modified acid gas processing arrangement **300B**, additional equipment will be required to compress and inject CO₂ along with the H₂S. In
25 addition, corrosion inhibitors may be needed to retard the reaction of CO₂ with the steel in the solvent contacting process.

[0116] The modified tail gas treating unit **300B** of **Figure 3B** substantially reduces the amount of carbon dioxide vented into the atmosphere from a hydrocarbon gas processing facility. In this respect, CO₂ is substantially no longer released through overhead by-products
30 line **352** or transported to the incinerator **250** through line **390**; instead, CO₂ is primarily released with the overhead sour gas stream **372**, and sequestered. This is demonstrated in

Figure 4.

[0117] **Figure 4** shows a schematic view of a gas processing facility **400** of the present invention, in one embodiment. The facility **400** is essentially the gas processing facility **200** of **Figure 2**. However, the overhead sour gas stream is now directed to a compressor station for pressurization and acid gas injection. In addition, a portion of the acid gas removed from the acid gas removal facility **220** is now sent directly to the compressor station for acid gas injection.

[0118] In **Figure 4**, a raw gas stream **410** is shown entering an acid gas removal facility **420**. The gas stream **410** may be, for example, raw natural gas from a hydrocarbon recovery operation. However, it may alternatively be a flue gas stream from an industrial power plant or other plant.

[0119] In the context of an oil and gas operation, the gas stream **410** contains at least one hydrocarbon gas component, principally methane. In addition, the gas stream **410** contains carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and, perhaps, other acid gas components. The acid gas removal facility **420** operates to separate out the acid gas components from the hydrocarbon gases. This may be done, for example, through the various solvent reaction processes discussed above. Alternatively, a cryogenic separation process may be employed, such as the use of the Controlled Freeze Zone™ (CFZ) process created by ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company.

[0120] In **Figure 4**, a sweetened gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **420** overhead. This is shown at line **422**. In addition, an acid gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **420** as a bottoms stream. This is shown at line **424**. The acid gas stream **424** contains primarily carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, and enters a Claus reactor facility **430**. The Claus reactor facility **430** serves as a sulfur recovery unit. This may be in accordance with the sulfur recovery unit **100** shown and described in connection with **Figure 1**, above.

[0121] In **Figure 4**, an elemental sulfur stream is shown exiting the Claus reactor facility **430**. This is seen at **432**. The elemental sulfur is typically released from a condenser as a molten liquid, and then hardens as it freezes.

[0122] A tail gas stream also exits the Claus reactor facility **430**, through line **434**. The tail gas stream **434** is directed to a TGTU. The TGTU is shown at **440**. In the TGTU **440**, the tail gas stream **434** is “cleaned.” The TGTU **440** may be in accordance with the tail gas

treating facility **300B** shown and described in connection with **Figure 3B**. In the arrangement of **Figure 4**, hydrogen sulfide with carbon dioxide is directed from the TGTU **440** through acid gas line **442**. This is in accordance with lines **362** and **372** of **Figure 3B**.

[0123] The acid gases in line **442** are directed to a compressor station **460**. From there, the compressed acid gases are directed through line **462**, and then injected into a reservoir. The reservoir is depicted schematically at block **465**. The acid gases from line **462** are thus sequestered in a subsurface location rather than being vented or recycled back to the sulfur recovery unit **430** as shown at line **242** in **Figure 2**.

[0124] The remaining products, consisting primarily of nitrogen, water vapor, small amounts of carbon dioxide, and traces of hydrogen are directed to an incinerator **450**. These by-products exit the tail gas treating unit **440** through line **444**. This is in accordance with lines **352** and **390** in **Figure 3B**. These by-products are burned and vented to the atmosphere through vent line **452**.

[0125] It is also noted from **Figure 4** that a portion of the acid gases from line **424** are bypassed around the sulfur recovery unit **430**. This is shown in line **426**. The acid gases in line **426** are directed to the compressor station **460** and merged with the acid gas stream **442** leaving the tail gas treating unit **440**. The acid gases from lines **426** and **442** are then compressed and sent to injection line **462**. Thus, overall acid gas venting into the atmosphere is reduced.

[0126] By way of example, if a field produces 1 billion cubic feet of feed gas per day with a 5% CO₂ content, a 90% recovery would capture nearly 1 million tons of CO₂ per year. Considering the large number of existing Claus units processing gas with at least some level of CO₂, this could amount to many million tons per year of additional CO₂ captured.

[0127] Another way to reduce CO₂ emissions disclosed herein relates to the process of acid gas enrichment (AGE). In some gas processing applications, the H₂S content of the original acid gas (bottom acid gas stream from line **424** in **Figure 4**) is too low to make the conventional Claus SRU function properly. The Claus furnace **120** generally requires a sulfurous component content of at least 40% for “straight through” Claus design, and more preferably greater than 50% H₂S. In these cases, it is known to “enrich” the acid gas with respect to H₂S by removing CO₂ from the acid gas stream in line **424**, and delivering the CO₂-rich stream directly to the incinerator **450**. In one or more embodiments, the acid gas line **442** is directed to an acid gas enrichment facility thereby generating a “cleaner” CO₂.

[0128] **Figure 5A** provides a schematic diagram of a known gas processing facility **500A** for treating acid gas captured from an acid gas removal system. In **Figure 5A**, a raw gas stream **510** is shown entering an acid gas removal facility **520**. The gas stream **510** preferably comprises raw natural gas from a hydrocarbon recovery operation. Optionally, the raw natural gas stream **510** has undergone dehydration such as through the use of glycol. Further, the raw natural gas stream **510** has preferably passed through an inlet separator (not shown) to filter out impurities such as brine and drilling fluids.

[0129] The gas stream **510** contains at least one hydrocarbon gas component, principally methane. In addition, the gas stream **510** contains acid gases. The acid gas removal facility **520** operates to separate out the acid gas components from the hydrocarbon gases. This may be done, for example, through the various solvent reaction processes discussed above. Alternatively, a cryogenic separation process may be employed, such as the use of the Controlled Freeze Zone™ (CFZ) process.

[0130] In **Figure 5A**, a sweetened gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **520** overhead. This is shown at line **522**. In addition, an acid gas stream is seen exiting the acid gas removal facility **520** as a first acid gas stream. This is shown at line **524**. The acid gas stream **524** contains primarily carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, and enters a Claus reactor **530**. The Claus reactor **530** serves as a SRU.

[0131] As discussed above in connection with **Figure 1**, the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530** operates to break sulfurous components in the acid gas stream down into elemental sulfur. In **Figure 5A**, an elemental sulfur stream is shown exiting the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530**. This is seen at **532**. A tail gas stream also exits the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530**, through line **534**.

[0132] The tail gas stream **534** is directed to a TGTU. The TGTU is shown at **540**. In the TGTU **540**, the tail gas stream **534** is “cleaned.” In the arrangement of **Figure 5A**, hydrogen sulfide is directed from the TGTU **540**, and recycled back to the front end of the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530** in accordance with known procedures. This is seen at line **542**. Alternatively, hydrogen sulfide is directed from the TGTU **540** and recycled back to an acid gas enrichment facility **570**, thereby generating a “cleaner” CO₂. The remaining TGTU products, consisting primarily of carbon dioxide along with water vapor and nitrogen, are directed to an incinerator **550** through line **544**. These by-products are burned and vented to the atmosphere through vent line **558**.

[0133] In order to increase the efficiency of the Claus sulfur recovery facility 530, the acid gas stream in line 524 is passed through an acid gas enrichment (AGE) facility. This is shown in phantom at block 570. The AGE facility 570 releases a portion of the carbon dioxide in the acid gas stream 524 through overhead line 572A. The release of CO₂ is typically done by the use of an H₂S selective amine in a chemical solvent process. The process may utilize an H₂S-selective amine, e.g., sterically hindered amines such as MDEA or Flexsorb[®], allowing the carbon dioxide to pass upward as an overhead gas stream. Optionally, the sterically hindered amine may be activated with piperazine to reduce H₂S levels, while still releasing CO₂. Line 572A may also contain some water vapor, H₂S, and hydrocarbon gas, but still represents a CO₂-rich gas stream. The CO₂-rich gas stream in line 572A is taken around the Claus SRU 530 and the TGTU 540 to the incinerator 550.

[0134] In operation, the carbon dioxide and other gases in line 572A are merged with the non-sulfurous by-products of the TGTU 540, which have been released in line 544. Line 544 of Figure 5A is comparable to line 352 in Figure 3A, which consists primarily of nitrogen, water vapor, helium, and carbon dioxide. The CO₂ and other components from line 572A (or line 544) are directed to a heating area 552 in the incinerator 550, and then passed to a stack 556. The CO₂ and other by-products are burned together and vented to the atmosphere through vent line 558.

[0135] The AGE facility 570 also passes acid gas comprised primarily of H₂S, along with a lesser amount of carbon dioxide. The H₂S-enriched acid gas is released through line 574, where it enters the Claus SRU 530. The H₂S is substantially converted to elemental sulfur and deposited through line 532 as a molten liquid. This represents standard practice for sulfur recovery.

[0136] A side benefit of using an AGE facility 570 is that hydrocarbons, particularly any heavy hydrocarbons that have desorbed into the acid gas stream 524, are slipped to the overhead gas line 572A instead of the Claus sulfur recovery unit 530. This improves performance of the Claus SRU 530, and reduces demand for air through air line 314.

[0137] As an alternative to the gas processing system 500A shown in Figure 5A, it is proposed herein to deliver the CO₂-rich gas in overhead gas line 572A to a compressor station. The CO₂ may then be compressed and injected into a reservoir rather than being vented to the atmosphere.

[0138] **Figure 5B** presents a schematic view of a gas processing facility **500B** for the removal of acid gases, in a modified embodiment. Gas processing facility **500B** is similar to gas processing facility **500A**. In this respect, gas processing facility **500B** receives a raw natural gas stream **510**. The natural gas stream **510** is directed into an acid gas removal system **520**. The acid gas removal system **520** releases a sweetened overhead gas stream **572** and an acid gas stream **524**. The gas processing facility **500B** also includes an acid gas enrichment (AGE) facility **570**. The AGE facility **570** receives the acid gas stream **524**, and then releases a CO₂-rich overhead gas stream **572** and an H₂S-rich acid gas stream **574**.

[0139] The gas processing facility **500B** also includes a Claus reactor **530**. The Claus reactor **530** serves as a sulfur recovery unit. The Claus reactor **530** receives the H₂S-rich acid gas stream **574** from the acid gas removal system **520** through line **524**, and deposits elemental sulfur **532** through an oxidation process such as the process discussed above in connection with **Figure 1**. The Claus reactor **530** also releases a tail gas stream through line **534**.

[0140] The tail gas stream in line **534** is directed to a tail gas treating unit **540**. The TGTU **540** “cleans” the tail gas in line **534** such as discussed above in connection with **Figure 3B**. The TGTU **540** releases an overhead by-products gas stream **554** (comparable to line **352** in **Figure 3B**) from the absorber vessel **350**. The TGTU **540** also releases a sour gas stream **542** (comparable to lines **362B** and **372** in **Figure 3B**). The by-products gas stream **554** enters the incinerator **550** where the water vapor, hydrogen, nitrogen, and H₂S components are burned and vented to the atmosphere. At the same time, the sour gas stream **542** (comparable to acid gas overhead line **372** in **Figure 3B**) is taken to a compressor station **560** (comparable to the compressor station **460** of **Figure 4**). Alternatively, the sour gas stream **542** can be recycled to an AGE facility.

[0141] In order to increase the efficiency of the Claus reactor facility **530**, the gas processing facility **500B** also includes the acid gas enrichment facility **570**. The AGE facility **570** receives the acid gas stream in line **524**. The AGE facility **570** removes a portion of the carbon dioxide in the acid gas stream **524** and releases it as a CO₂-rich gas through overhead line **572B**. The remaining H₂S-rich acid gas is passed through line **574** to the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530**. Thus, acid gas enrichment takes place between the acid gas removal system **520** and the Claus sulfur recovery facility **530**.

[0142] The carbon dioxide may be separated from the sulfurous components in the AGE facility **570** by utilizing an amine solvent, as mentioned above. In connection with the

chemical solvent process for removing CO₂, an absorber vessel and a regenerator vessel are utilized. The rich amine solution from the absorber vessel may optionally be “flashed” in a flash vessel before it reaches the regenerator vessel.

[0143] The CO₂-rich gas is released from the acid gas enrichment facility **570** through overhead line **572B**. Line **572B** in **Figure 5B** differs from line **572A** in **Figure 5A**. Line **572B** directs the CO₂-rich gas to the compressor station **560**. Thus, rather than incinerating and venting the CO₂-rich gas as is done in **Figure 5A**, the CO₂ is captured and sequestered in a subsurface reservoir **565**. This was also shown at line **442** in **Figure 4**, where the gas processing facility **400** includes a compressor station **460**.

[0144] Since the overhead gas stream in line **572B** is comprised primarily of CO₂ and typically contains very small concentrations of light gas components like nitrogen and methane, the gas is comparatively easy to compress and condense. Injection of this CO₂-rich gas stream readily reduces the “CO₂ footprint” of the gas treating facility **500B**. Such an operation also improves the sulfur recovery efficiency of the facility **500B** as the residual sulfur in the CO₂-rich overhead gas line **572B** is not incinerated and released to the atmosphere, or recycled back to the Claus SRU **530**.

[0145] In another aspect of the gas processing facility **500B**, a single stage co-current contactor may be employed as part of the tail gas treating unit **540**. The co-current contactor may be, for example, the ProsCon contactor manufactured by ProsCon of Cork, Ireland. This contactor utilizes an eductor followed by a centrifugal coalescer. The centrifugal coalescer induces large centrifugal forces to re-integrate the liquid solvent in a small volume.

[0146] The co-current contactor is placed into the tail gas treating unit **540** upstream of the absorber. The contactor received fresh amine from the acid gas enrichment facility **570**. Because the contact time within a co-current contactor is so short, H₂S is preferentially absorbed from the tail gas (such as tail gas in line **534** of **Figure 5B**).

[0147] An H₂S-rich amine solution is released from the co-current contactor. This H₂S-rich amine solution is sent to a regenerator for the acid gas enrichment facility **570**. There, the rich amine is combined with rich amine from the acid gas enrichment facility **570**, and H₂S is separated from the amine component to create a regenerated amine stream.

[0148] The H₂S driven from the H₂S-rich amine solution is passed to the Claus sulfur recovery unit **530**. There, the H₂S is converted to elemental sulfur and released with the liquid sulfur stream **532**. Meanwhile, the gas that passes through the single stage co-current

contactor is delivered to the absorber (such as absorber **350** of **Figure 3B**) for the tail gas treating unit **540**. There, CO₂ and any remaining H₂S will be absorbed and released through line **354**. The result is that the overhead sour gas stream (line **372** from **Figure 3B** or line **542** from **Figure 5**) will contain less H₂S, and will be more suitable for enhanced oil recovery operations upon injection into the subsurface reservoir **565**.

[0149] In this embodiment, the gas processing facility **500B** therefore comprises a single-stage, co-current contactor placed between the Claus sulfur recovery unit and the absorber vessel of the tail gas treating unit for (i) at least partially removing H₂S from the tail gas before it is delivered to the absorber vessel, and (ii) releasing a CO₂-rich stream to the absorber vessel in the tail gas treating unit.

[0150] It will be appreciated that **Figures 3A, 3B, 4, 5A, and 5B** present highly schematic diagrams intended to make clear only selected aspects of the gas processing methods disclosed herein. A gas processing facility will include many detailed components such as chillers, heat exchangers, condensers, fluid pumps, gas compressors, blowers, other types of separation and/or fractionation equipment, valves, switches, controllers, and pressure-, temperature-, level-, and flow-measuring devices.

[0151] As part of the disclosure herein, a method for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream is also provided herein. The method allows for the capture of additional CO₂ and for the sequestration of the captured CO₂ in a subsurface reservoir.

[0152] **Figure 6** provides a flow chart demonstrating steps for carrying out the method **600** for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream, in one embodiment. The hydrocarbon gas stream comprises sulfurous components and carbon dioxide. The method **600** is carried out at a gas processing facility.

[0153] The method **600** first includes separating the hydrocarbon gas stream at an acid gas removal facility. This is shown at Box **610**. The hydrocarbon gas stream is separated into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide.

[0154] The method **600** also includes receiving the acid gas stream at a Claus sulfur recovery unit. This is shown at Box **620**. The acid gas stream is separated into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities.

[0155] The method **600** further includes receiving the tail gas at a tail gas treating unit. This is shown at Box **630**. The tail gas is separated into (i) an overhead by-products stream

from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel. Preferably, the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that a majority of the CO₂ and H₂S entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the
5 regenerator vessel as a rich solvent stream. Both the carbon dioxide and the sulfurous components are later released from the regenerator vessel as the tail gas treating unit regenerated overhead gas stream.

[0156] The method 600 next includes delivering the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel to a compressor station. This is shown in Box 640. At the compressor
10 station, pressure is provided to the second acid gas stream. The method 600 then provides for injecting the second acid gas stream into a subsurface reservoir. This is presented in Box 650.

[0157] In one aspect, a portion of the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the
15 subsurface reservoir. This is provided in Box 660. The portion of the acid gas stream is injected along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

[0158] The method 600 also comprises providing one and optionally a plurality of acid gas injection wells. This is seen at Box 670. The plurality of acid gas injection wells transmit the overhead acid gas stream from the tail gas treating unit to the subsurface
20 reservoir for sequestration or for enhanced oil recovery operations.

[0159] In one embodiment, the method 600 also includes warming the rich solvent stream in a heat exchanger before it enters the regenerator vessel, and optionally directing the warmed rich solvent stream into a flash vessel before the rich solvent stream enters the
25 regenerator vessel. The flash vessel releases at least some hydrocarbons as well as hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide as an overhead sour gas stream. Depending on conditions of the flash vessel and the type of amine, it may be possible to partially enrich the flashed overhead gas relative to H₂S or CO₂. This enriched gas may then be segregated from the regenerator overhead gas, and directed to a separate reservoir, for example.

[0160] In another embodiment, the method 600 further comprises separating residual
30 amine and condensed water from carbon dioxide and sulfurous components in the sour gas stream in a condenser vessel. The residual amine and condensed water are directed back to the regenerator vessel. In this embodiment, the sour gas stream from the regenerator vessel is

taken through the condenser vessel before it is delivered to the compressor station for pressurization and sequestration.

[0161] Preferably, the method 600 further comprises incinerating the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel. This is shown in Box 680. The method then includes venting the incinerated by-products stream into the atmosphere. This is seen at Box 690.

[0162] In one arrangement, the gas processing facility further comprises an acid gas enrichment facility for receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream. In this arrangement, the method comprises:

receiving the H₂S-rich acid gas stream as the acid gas stream at the Claus sulfur recovery unit;
delivering the overhead CO₂-rich stream to the compressor station;
providing pressure to the overhead CO₂-rich stream at the compressor station; and
injecting the overhead CO₂-rich stream into the subsurface reservoir along with the sour gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

[0163] While it will be apparent that the inventions herein described are well calculated to achieve the benefits and advantages set forth above, it will be appreciated that the inventions are susceptible to modification, variation and change without departing from the spirit thereof. For example, the various inventions have been described herein in connection with the processing of a gas stream incident to hydrocarbon recovery operations. However, the gas processing facilities and methods may be applied to the recovery and sequestration of carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide in other applications.

[0164] For example, the gas processing facilities and methods may be applied to the recovery and sequestration of carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide from a flue gas stream from a power plant. Alternatively, the gas stream may be a flash gas stream taken from a flash drum in a gas processing facility itself. Alternatively, the gas stream may be a synthesis gas stream (so-called "syn-gas"). It is noted that where syn-gas is used, the gas will need to be cooled and undergo solids filtration before introduction into the facility 400 or 500B. Alternatively still, the gas stream may be a CO₂ emission from a cement plant or other

industrial plant. In this instance, CO₂ may be absorbed from excess air or from a nitrogen-containing flue gas.

[0165] Provided are further embodiments A-Z:

Embodiment A: A gas processing facility for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream
5 comprising sulfurous components and carbon dioxide, the gas processing facility comprising:

an acid gas removal facility for separating the hydrocarbon gas stream into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide;

a Claus sulfur recovery unit for receiving the acid gas stream, and separating the first
10 acid gas stream into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities;

a tail gas treating unit for receiving the tail gas, and separating the tail gas into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel, the second acid gas stream containing a substantial portion of the
15 hydrogen sulfide and the carbon dioxide in the tail gas; and

a compressor station for receiving the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel, and providing pressure to the second acid gas stream for injection into a subsurface reservoir.

20 Embodiment B: The gas processing facility of embodiment A, wherein the tail gas treating unit reduces the oxidized sulfur species to H₂S.

Embodiment C: The gas processing facility of embodiment A or B, wherein the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that
25 a majority of the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel as a rich solvent stream.

Embodiment D: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments C, wherein the amine comprises diethanol amine (DEA), di-isopropanol amine (DIPA), monoethanol (MEA), or
30 combinations thereof.

Embodiment E: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments D, wherein:

the amine comprises methyl diethanol amine (MDEA); and
the MDEA is activated to facilitate CO₂ absorption.

Embodiment F: The gas processing facility of embodiment E, wherein the MDEA is
5 activated with piperazine.

Embodiment G: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-F, further comprising:
a plurality of acid gas injection wells for transmitting the second acid gas stream from
the compressor station to the subsurface reservoir.

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Embodiment H: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-G, wherein the
overhead gas stream is used for enhanced oil recovery operations in the subsurface reservoir.

Embodiment I: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-H, further comprising:
15 a heat exchanger for warming the rich solvent stream before it enters the regenerator
vessel.

Embodiment J: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-I, wherein a portion of
the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station
20 and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second
acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

Embodiment K: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments C-J, further comprising:
a condenser vessel for separating residual amine and condensed water from carbon
25 dioxide and sulfurous components in the second acid gas stream; and
a line for directing the residual amine and condensed water back to the regenerator
vessel;
and wherein the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel is taken through
the condenser vessel for removal of residual amine before it is delivered to the compressor
30 station.

Embodiment L: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments C-K, further comprising:

an acid gas enrichment facility for receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream; and

wherein:

5 the first acid gas stream received by the Claus sulfur recovery unit is the H₂S-rich acid gas stream, and

 the overhead CO₂-rich stream is directed from the acid gas enrichment facility to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating unit.

10

Embodiment M: The gas processing facility of embodiment L, further comprising:

 a single-stage, co-current contactor placed between the quench tower and the absorber vessel of the tail gas treating unit for (i) at least partially removing H₂S from the tail gas before it is delivered to the absorber vessel, and (ii) releasing a CO₂-rich stream to the absorber vessel in the tail gas treating unit.

15

Embodiment N: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-M, further comprising:

 an incinerator for receiving the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel for incineration.

20

Embodiment O: The gas processing facility of claim embodiment N, wherein the incinerator either incinerates through a fuel gas combustion process, or through a catalytic incineration process.

25

Embodiment P: The gas processing facility of any of embodiments A-O, wherein the hydrocarbon gas stream comprises raw natural gas from a hydrocarbon production operation, a flue gas stream from an industrial power plant, or a CO₂ emission from a cement plant.

30 Embodiment Q: A method for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream in a gas processing facility, the hydrocarbon gas stream comprising sulfurous components and carbon dioxide, the method comprising:

separating the hydrocarbon gas stream at an acid gas removal facility into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide;

5 receiving the acid gas stream at a Claus sulfur recovery unit and separating the acid gas stream into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities;

receiving the tail gas at a tail gas treating unit, and separating the tail gas into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel, the second acid gas stream containing a substantial portion of the carbon
10 dioxide in the tail gas;

delivering the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel to a compressor station;

providing pressure to the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel at a compressor station; and

15 injecting the second acid gas stream into a subsurface reservoir.

Embodiment R: The method of embodiment Q, wherein the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that a majority of the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from
20 the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel along with sulfurous components as a rich solvent stream.

Embodiment S: The method of embodiment R, wherein the amine comprises diethanol amine (DEA), di-isopropanol amine (DIPA), monoethanol (MEA), or combinations thereof.

25

Embodiment T: The method of embodiment S, wherein:

the amine comprises methyl diethanol amine (MDEA); and

the MDEA is activated to facilitate CO₂ absorption.

30 Embodiment U: The method of embodiment T, wherein the MDEA is activated with piperazine.

Embodiment V: The method of any of embodiments Q-U, further comprising:

providing a plurality of acid gas injection wells for transmitting the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel in the tail gas treating unit to the subsurface reservoir for enhanced oil recovery operations.

- 5 Embodiment W: The method of any of embodiments Q-V, wherein a portion of the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating unit.
- 10 Embodiment X: The method of any of embodiments R-W, further comprising:
separating residual amine and condensed water from carbon dioxide and sulfurous components in the second acid gas stream in a condenser vessel; and
directing the residual amine and condensed water back to the regenerator vessel;
wherein the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel is taken through the
15 condenser vessel for removal of residual amine before it is delivered to the compressor station.

Embodiment Y: The method of any of embodiments Q-X, wherein:

- the gas processing facility further comprises an acid gas enrichment facility for
20 receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream; and
the method further comprises:
receiving the H₂S-rich acid gas stream as the acid gas stream at the Claus
sulfur recovery unit;
25 delivering the overhead CO₂-rich stream to the compressor station;
providing pressure to the overhead CO₂-rich stream at the compressor station;
and
injecting the overhead CO₂-rich stream into the subsurface reservoir along
with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating
30 unit.

Embodiment Z: The method of any of embodiments Q-Y, further comprising:

incinerating the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel; and
venting the incinerated by-products stream into the atmosphere.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A gas processing facility for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream comprising sulfurous components and carbon dioxide, the gas processing facility comprising:

an acid gas removal facility for separating the hydrocarbon gas stream into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide;

a Claus sulfur recovery unit for receiving the acid gas stream, and separating the first acid gas stream into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities;

a tail gas treating unit for receiving the tail gas, and separating the tail gas into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel, the second acid gas stream containing a substantial portion of the hydrogen sulfide and the carbon dioxide in the tail gas; and

a compressor station for receiving the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel, and providing pressure to the second acid gas stream for injection into a subsurface reservoir.

2. The gas processing facility of claim 1, wherein the tail gas treating unit is also for reducing the oxidized sulfur species to H_2S .

3. The gas processing facility of claim 1, wherein the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that a majority of the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel as a rich solvent stream.

4. The gas processing facility of claim 3, wherein the amine comprises diethanol amine (DEA), di-isopropanol amine (DIPA), monoethanol (MEA), or combinations thereof.

5. The gas processing facility of claim 3, wherein:

the amine comprises methyl diethanol amine (MDEA); and

the MDEA is activated to facilitate CO_2 absorption.

6. The gas processing facility of claim 5, wherein the MDEA is activated with piperazine.

7. The gas processing facility of claim 1, further comprising:

a plurality of acid gas injection wells for transmitting the second acid gas stream from the compressor station to the subsurface reservoir.

8. The gas processing facility of claim 7, wherein the overhead gas stream is used for enhanced oil recovery operations in the subsurface reservoir.

9. The gas processing facility of claim 3, further comprising:

a heat exchanger for warming the rich solvent stream before it enters the regenerator vessel.

10. The gas processing facility of claim 3, wherein a portion of the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel.

11. The gas processing facility of claim 3, further comprising:

a condenser vessel for separating residual amine and condensed water from carbon dioxide and sulfurous components in the second acid gas stream; and

a line for directing the residual amine and condensed water back to the regenerator vessel;

and wherein the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel is taken through the condenser vessel for removal of residual amine before it is delivered to the compressor station.

12. The gas processing facility of claim 3, further comprising:

an acid gas enrichment facility for receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream; and

wherein:

the first acid gas stream received by the Claus sulfur recovery unit is the H₂S- rich acid gas stream, and

the overhead CO₂-rich stream is directed from the acid gas enrichment facility to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating unit.

13. The gas processing facility of claim 12, further comprising:

a single-stage, co-current contactor placed between the quench tower and the absorber vessel of the tail gas treating unit for (i) at least partially removing H₂S from the tail gas before it is delivered to the absorber vessel, and (ii) releasing a CO₂-rich stream to the absorber vessel in the tail gas treating unit.

14. The gas processing facility of claim 3, further comprising:

an incinerator for receiving the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel for incineration.

15. The gas processing facility of claim 1, wherein the hydrocarbon gas stream comprises raw natural gas from a hydrocarbon production operation, a flue gas stream from an industrial power plant, or a CO₂ emission from a cement plant.

16. A method for processing a hydrocarbon gas stream in a gas processing facility, the hydrocarbon gas stream comprising sulfurous components and carbon dioxide, the method comprising:

separating the hydrocarbon gas stream at an acid gas removal facility into (i) a sweetened gas stream, and (ii) a first acid gas stream comprised primarily of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide;

receiving the acid gas stream at a Claus sulfur recovery unit and separating the acid gas stream into (i) a liquid stream of elemental sulfur, and (ii) a tail gas comprising acid gas impurities;

receiving the tail gas at a tail gas treating unit, and separating the tail gas into (i) an overhead by-products stream from an absorber vessel, and (ii) a second acid gas stream from a regenerator vessel, the second acid gas stream containing a substantial portion of the carbon dioxide in the tail gas;

delivering the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel to a compressor station;

providing pressure to the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel at a compressor station; and

injecting the second acid gas stream into a subsurface reservoir.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the absorber vessel utilizes an amine that absorbs both carbon dioxide and sulfurous components such that a majority of the carbon dioxide entering the tail gas treating unit is absorbed in the absorber vessel and released from the absorber vessel to the regenerator vessel along with sulfurous components as a rich solvent stream.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the amine comprises diethanol amine (DEA), di-isopropanol amine (DIPA), monoethanol (MEA), or combinations thereof.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein:

the amine comprises methyl diethanol amine (MDEA); and

the MDEA is activated to facilitate CO₂ absorption.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the MDEA is activated with piperazine.

21. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

providing a plurality of acid gas injection wells for transmitting the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel in the tail gas treating unit to the subsurface reservoir for enhanced oil recovery operations.

22. The method of claim 16, wherein a portion of the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility is taken to the compressor station and placed under pressure for injection into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating unit.

23. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

separating residual amine and condensed water from carbon dioxide and sulfurous components in the second acid gas stream in a condenser vessel; and

directing the residual amine and condensed water back to the regenerator vessel;

wherein the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel is taken through the condenser vessel for removal of residual amine before it is delivered to the compressor station.

24. The method of claim 16, wherein:

the gas processing facility further comprises an acid gas enrichment facility for receiving the first acid gas stream from the acid gas removal facility, and separating the acid gas stream into (i) an overhead CO₂-rich stream, and (ii) an H₂S-rich acid gas stream; and the method further comprises:

receiving the H₂S-rich acid gas stream as the acid gas stream at the Claus sulfur recovery unit;

delivering the overhead CO₂-rich stream to the compressor station;

providing pressure to the overhead CO₂-rich stream at the compressor station; and

injecting the overhead CO₂-rich stream into the subsurface reservoir along with the second acid gas stream from the regenerator vessel of the tail gas treating unit.

25. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

incinerating the overhead by-products stream from the absorber vessel; and venting the incinerated by-products stream into the atmosphere.