

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT USING GRAVIMETRIC SELECTION

CROSS REFERENCE TO PRIOR APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to and the benefit thereof from U.S. provisional patent application no. 61/730,196, filed November 27, 2012, titled “Method and Apparatus for Wastewater Treatment Using Gravimetric Selection,” the entirety of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to a method and an apparatus for wastewater treatment and, more specifically, to a method and an apparatus for wastewater treatment with gravimetric selection.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] Gravity separation is usually used to remove solids associated with the activated sludge process. A methodology has been developed to improve settling of solids by gravimetric selection. This methodology might also be applied to decrease membrane fouling in a membrane bioreactor (MBR) process or to decrease membrane diffuser fouling. There are currently three approaches to select for solids that settle well. The first is strategies within an activated sludge process to select for well settling solids such as by using aerobic and anoxic or anaerobic zones or selectors to improve settling.

However, there is a mixed history with the use of these selectors and it does not always work.

[0004] The second method includes using shear/agitation in a reactor to select for granular solids that settle well. This selection is also accompanied with an increase in the overflow rate of sludge in the mainstream solid-liquid gravity separator. This selection process is often gradual and tedious, and, since the selector is associated with the mainstream process, it can result in problems associated with meeting permit requirements. In most cases, only a sequencing batch reactor process allows the flexibility to increase over time and modify the overflow rate.

[0005] The third method includes selecting and wasting the poor settling foam and entrapped solids, often by collecting and “surface wasting” the foam and solids at the surface of a reactor using “classifying selectors”. While this approach was originally intended to reduce foam, it also selectively washes out the solids that do not settle well, as these slow settling solids tend to accumulate near the surface in reactors. Hence, this method retains only the solids that settle well, thereby providing a method that may be useful in deselecting poor settling solids, but which may have limited use in selecting settling solids. In implementing this method the settling characteristics improvements are often inconsistent, as sometimes poor settling solids, if they are produced at rates in excess of, e.g., a classifier surface removal rate, are retained and remain in the sludge.

[0006] An unfulfilled need exists for a method and an apparatus for wastewater treatment that does not have the drawbacks of the methods currently used to select and separate solids from wastewater.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0007] According to an aspect of the disclosure, a method is provided for selecting and retaining solids with superior settling characteristics. The method comprises: feeding wastewater to an input of a processor that carries out a biological treatment process on the wastewater; outputting processed wastewater at an output of the processor; feeding the processed wastewater to an input of a gravimetric selector that selects solids with superior settling characteristics; and outputting a recycle stream at a first output of the gravimetric selector.

[0008] The method may further comprise outputting a waste stream at a second output of the gravimetric selector to solids handling, where solids handling includes at least one thickening, stabilizing, conditioning, and dewatering. The waste stream may be rejected and the recycle stream may be returned to the processor. The waste stream may comprise solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics or that have increased potential for membrane fouling.

[0009] The method may further comprise supplying the recycle stream from the first output of the gravimetric selector to the processor. The recycle stream may comprise solids with superior settling characteristics.

[0010] The treatment process may comprise: a suspended growth activated sludge process; a granular sludge process; an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process; a biological nutrient removal process; an aerobic digestion process; or an anaerobic digestion process.

[0011] The treatment process may comprise a biological treatment process. The biological treatment process may comprise an in-line solid-liquid separation process.

[0012] The processor may comprise a membrane separator.

[0013] The processor may comprise a cyclone that accelerates the wastewater and provides shear-force to the wastewater to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics.

[0014] The processor may comprise a centrifuge that provides centrifugal and shear force to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics in the wastewater.

[0015] The feed rate to and a geometry of the cyclone may be configured to adjust a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone to select for larger or more dense solids or increase a time available for separation in the cyclone.

[0016] The process of feeding the processed wastewater to the input of the gravimetric selector may comprise: feeding the processed wastewater to an input of a separator that separates the wastewater into an underflow and effluent; receiving the underflow from the separator; and gravimetrically selecting solids with superior settling characteristics from the underflow and supplying the recycle stream to the first output.

[0017] The method may further comprise controlling a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone so that solids of a predetermined size or density are retained.

[0018] The method may further comprise controlling a hydraulic loading rate to select settling solids of a predetermined size or density.

[0019] According to a further aspect of the disclosure, an apparatus is provided that selects and retains solids with superior settling characteristics. The apparatus comprises: a processor that comprises an input and an output, the processor being configured to carry out a treatment process; and a gravimetric selector that comprises an input, a waste stream output and a recycle stream output, wherein the recycle stream output of the gravimetric selector is coupled to the input of the processor.

[0020] The input of the gravimetric selector may be coupled to the output of the processor.

[0021] The input of the gravimetric selector may be coupled to an underflow output of a separator.

[0022] The recycle stream output of the gravimetric selector may supply a recycle stream to the processor, the recycle stream may comprise solids with superior settling characteristics.

[0023] The treatment process may comprise: a suspended growth activated sludge process; a granular process; an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process; a biological nutrient removal process; an aerobic digestion process; or an anaerobic digestion process.

[0024] The processor may comprise a bioreactor process. The bioreactor process may comprise an in-line solid to liquid separation process.

[0025] The processor may comprise a cyclone that accelerates the wastewater and provides shear-force to the wastewater to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics.

[0026] The processor may comprise a centrifuge that provides centrifugal and shear force to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics in the wastewater.

[0027] The feed rate a geometry of the cyclone may be configured to adjust a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone to: select for larger or more dense solids; or increase a time available for separation in the cyclone.

[0028] The apparatus may further comprise a separator that has an input coupled to the output of the processor.

[0029] The cyclone may control a velocity of the wastewater to adjust an overflow rate so that settling solids of a predetermined size or density are retained.

[0030] The cyclone may control a hydraulic loading rate to select settling solids of a predetermined size or density.

[0031] According to a still further example of the disclosure, a method is provided for selecting and retaining solids with superior settling characteristics, where the method comprises: receiving wastewater from a wastewater supply; processing the wastewater to provide processed wastewater; gravimetrically selecting solids with settling characteristics from the processed wastewater; and supplying the selected solids to a

processor to further process the selected solids together with further wastewater received from the wastewater supply.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0032] The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a further understanding of the disclosure, are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the disclosure and together with the detailed description serve to explain the principles of the disclosure. No attempt is made to show structural details of the disclosure in more detail than may be necessary for a fundamental understanding of the disclosure and the various ways in which it may be practiced. In the drawings:

[0033] FIG. 1 shows an example of an activated sludge process where the wasting of sludge occurs via a waste stream taken from the underflow of a clarifier.

[0034] FIG. 2 shows an example of an activated sludge process according to the principles of the disclosure where the waste stream is taken directly from the reactor tank and applied to a gravimetric selector, with more dense and large particles are returned to the reactor and the lighter fraction, representing the wasted solids, are taken from the system.

[0035] FIG. 3 shows an activated sludge process according to the principles of the disclosure where the waste stream is taken from the underflow of a clarifier and applied to a gravimetric selector, with the large and more dense particles returned to the reactor and the lighter fraction representing the wasted solids taken from the system.

[0036] FIG. 4 shows a graph comparing the typical deterioration of sludge settling properties with the improved settling performance of the activated sludge processes of FIGS. 2 or 3.

[0037] FIG. 5 shows a graph comparing the deterioration of sludge settling properties at one process lane in a typical system with improved settling performance of a parallel lane according to the principles of the disclosure.

[0038] FIG. 6 shows a Sludge Volume Index (SVI) versus time chart for an activated sludge process according to the principles of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0039] The disclosure and the various features and advantageous details thereof are explained more fully with reference to the non-limiting embodiments and examples that are described and/or illustrated in the accompanying drawings and detailed in the following description. It should be noted that the features illustrated in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale, and features of one embodiment may be employed with other embodiments as the skilled artisan would recognize, even if not explicitly stated herein. Descriptions of well-known components and processing techniques may be omitted so as to not unnecessarily obscure the embodiments of the disclosure. The examples used herein are intended merely to facilitate an understanding of ways in which the disclosure may be practiced and to further enable those of skill in the art to practice the embodiments of the disclosure. Accordingly, the examples and embodiments herein should not be construed as limiting the scope of the disclosure. Moreover, it is noted that

like reference numerals represent similar parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

[0040] The terms “including,” “comprising” and variations thereof, as used in this disclosure, mean “including, but not limited to,” unless expressly specified otherwise.

[0041] The terms “a,” “an,” and “the,” as used in this disclosure, means “one or more”, unless expressly specified otherwise.

[0042] Although process steps, method steps, or the like, may be described in a sequential order, such processes and methods may be configured to work in alternate orders. In other words, any sequence or order of steps that may be described does not necessarily indicate a requirement that the steps be performed in that order. The steps of the processes or methods described herein may be performed in any order practical. Further, some steps may be performed simultaneously.

[0043] When a single device or article is described herein, it will be readily apparent that more than one device or article may be used in place of a single device or article. Similarly, where more than one device or article is described herein, it will be readily apparent that a single device or article may be used in place of the more than one device or article. The functionality or the features of a device may be alternatively embodied by one or more other devices which are not explicitly described as having such functionality or features.

[0044] FIG. 1 shows an example of an activated sludge process and a system 100 for carrying out the activated sludge process. The system 100 may include pretreatment,

which may include a bar screen 2, a grit remover (not shown), a pre-treatment chamber 3, and an influent pump (not shown). The system 100 may further include a primary separator 5, a processor 6, and a secondary separator 9. The system 100 may receive wastewater 1 from an external source (not shown), such as, e.g., a sewage system, and process the wastewater 1 in a pretreatment stage which may include, e.g., a bar screen 2 to remove larger objects such as cans, rags, sticks, plastic packets, and the like, from the wastewater 1. The pretreatment stage may also include a pre-treatment chamber 3, which may contain, e.g., a sand or grit chamber, to adjust the velocity of the incoming wastewater 1 and thereby allow the settlement of, e.g., sand, grit, stones, broken glass, and the like. The pre-treatment chamber 3 may be replaced by, e.g., a sand or grit channel. The pretreatment stage may further include a small tank for removal of, e.g., fat, grease, and the like.

[0045] Following the pretreatment stage, the remaining solid-liquid mixture 4A, which includes excess wastewater containing accumulated solids, may be sent to a primary separator 5 for gravity settling. The primary separator 5 may include a tank (e.g., a clarifier tank, a sediment tank, etc.), which may have one of a variety of shapes, such as, e.g., rectangular, cone shape, circular, elliptical, and so on. The primary separator 5 may have a chemical or ballast material added to improve solids removal. The primary separator 5 settles the heavier solids from the solid-liquid mixture 4A. The resulting underflow 8A may be output from the primary separator 5 and sent to solids handling for further treatment, such as, e.g., thickening, stabilization, conditioning,

dewatering, sludge processing, and so on, as is known by those having ordinary skill in the art.

[0046] The resulting solid-liquid mixture 4B containing soluble organic and inorganic contaminants and particulate materials may then be sent to the processor 6. The processor 6 may include a bioreactor. The processor 6 may include an aeration tank (not shown) and live aerobic and facultative bacteria. Air may be added to the mixture 4B to feed a bioreaction process (where aerobic bacteria are grown) in the processor 6. The aerobic bacteria will digest organic material in the presence of the dissolved oxygen.

[0047] The processor 6 may further include a membrane module (not shown) for separating relatively pure water from the suspension of organic matter and bacteria. If the membrane module is included in the processor 6, then the separator 9 may be omitted from the systems 200 (shown in FIG. 2) and 300 (shown in FIG. 3). The aerobic bacteria and the membrane module may be set up to run in succession in the membrane bioreactor (MBR). For example, the solid-liquid mixture may flow first through the bioreactor, where it may be held for as long as necessary for the reaction to be completed, and then through the membrane module.

[0048] The air may be added to the processor 6 via any known method that can supply air to the solid-liquid mixture 4B. A common method is through the addition of compressed air to fine bubble diffusers (not shown) constructed of perforated flexible membrane materials including EPDM and polyurethane. The processor 6 outputs an oxygenated solid-liquid mixture commonly known as mixed liquor 4C, which is then forwarded to the secondary separator 9,

[0049] The secondary separator 9 separates the solid-liquid mixture 4C to produce an underflow 4F, which may then be recycled as part of a separated sludge 7 and sent back to the bioreactor 6, and clarified wastewater as an effluent 10. A portion of the underflow biomass 8B (or mixed liquor) may be wasted from the process and sent to solids handling for further treatment, such as, e.g., thickening, stabilization, conditioning, dewatering, sludge processing, and so on, as is known by those having ordinary skill in the art

[0050] Alternatively, the processor 6 may include a membrane (not shown) that may be suspended in the slurry in the processor 6 (instead of the secondary separator 9), which may be appropriately partitioned to achieve the correct airflow, with the surplus withdrawn from the base of the processor 6 at a rate to give the required sludge retention time (SRT).

[0051] It is noted that instead of, or in addition to the processor 6, the system 200 may include, e.g., a granular sludge process, an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process, a biological nutrient removal process with various anaerobic, anoxic and aerobic zones with associated internal recycles, an aerobic digestion process, an anaerobic digestion process, and the like, as is known in the art.

[0052] FIG. 2 shows an example of a system 200 for carrying out the activated sludge process that is constructed according to the principles of this disclosure. The system 200 may include a similar set up as system 100. The system 200 may include a cyclone (not shown), a hydrocyclone (not shown), a centrifuge (not shown), a sedimentation tank (not shown), a sedimentation column (not shown), a filter (not shown), and the like. Further

to the components in the system 100, the system 200 includes a gravimetric separator 11. The system 200 has the ability to select for good settling solids by means of gravimetric selection in the gravimetric selector 11 through, e.g., direct wasting from the mixed liquor (or oxygenated solid-liquid mixture 4D). Good settling solids may include solids that exhibit a sludge volume index (SVI) of, e.g., less than 120 mL/gm, and preferably less than or equal to 100 mL/gm.

[0053] The gravimetric selector 11 may include, e.g., a clarifier, a settling tank, a cyclone, a hydrocyclone, a centrifuge, and the like. The gravimetric separator 11 may include an input and a plurality of outputs, including a waste stream output and a recycle stream output. The gravimetric separator 11 may be positioned to receive the oxygenated solid-liquid mixture or mixed liquor 4D at its input from an output of the processor 6. Alternatively (or additionally), the stream 4C may be input to the gravimetric selector 11. During operation, the gravimetric selector 11 may classify, separate and/or sort particles in the mixture 4D, which may include a liquid or liquid-solid suspension, based on, e.g., the ratio of the centripetal force to fluid resistance of the particles. The gravimetric selector 11 may separate good settling solids from the mixture 4D and output the solids at its recycle stream output as an underflow 4E, which may be fed back to the processor 6 for further processing (e.g., bioreaction, digestion, etc.). The gravimetric selector 11 may output the remaining liquid/liquid-suspension at its waste stream output as a waste stream 8C, which may contain smaller particles and colloids that have the potential to cause MBR membrane fouling, cause turbidity in effluent 10, and induce membrane air diffuser

fouling, that may be output from the system for further treatment such as, e.g., sludge processing, dewatering, and so on.

[0054] FIG. 3 shows yet another example of a system 300 for carrying out the activated sludge process that is constructed according to the principles of this disclosure. The system 300 may include a similar set up as system 100. Further to components in system 100, the system 300 may include the gravimetric selector 11, which may be positioned so as to receive an underflow 4F at its input from an output of the secondary separator 9. The system 300 has the ability to select for good settling solids by means of gravimetric selection in the gravimetric selector 11 through, e.g., direct wasting from the more concentrated return sludge 7.

[0055] The gravimetric selector 11 may process the underflow 4F, separating heavier solids from the liquid-solid mixture and outputting the heavier solids as underflow 4E at the recycle stream output and the resulting overflow 8C at the waste stream output of the gravimetric selector 11. The overflow 8C may be forwarded to solids handling for further treatment such as, e.g., stabilization, dewatering, and so on. The underflow 4E may be recycled together with the separated sludge 7 and returned to the processor 6 for further processing.

[0056] According to an alternative aspect of the disclosure, wasting of a portion (or all) of the sludge can occur directly from the underflow of the secondary separator 9, which is not shown in the figures.

[0057] The gravimetric selector 11 may include any one or more gravity separation devices for selecting and separating solids from a liquid-solid mixture, including, for example, a settling tank, a settling column, a cyclone, a hydrocyclone, a centrifuge, and/or the like. In the gravimetric selector 11, the overflow rate, which is also called the rise rate, can be used as a parameter in selecting good settling solids from the liquor (or sludge). This overflow rate can be adjusted to increase the wasting of poor settling solids, while only retaining good settling solids. An increase in the overflow rate can promote the selection for good settling solids until a certain point is reached, when the detention time is insufficient for proper classification of the solids. The target overflow rate of the gravity selection device should be based on the desired SRT of the process, and the associated need to remove a particular mass of biomass from the system. The specific overflow rate must be tuned to the particular device used, but would generally be expected to be 10 to 100 times the overflow rate of the secondary separation process 7.

[0058] Hydrocyclone separation occurs under pressure, and a pressure drop may be used as the energy source for separation. Accordingly, if the gravimetric selector 11 includes a hydrocyclone, the hydrocyclone should be configured so that the input is positioned to feed the incoming liquid-solid mixture tangentially in the hydrocyclone to develop a high radial velocity. Further, the hydrocyclone may have a tapered shape. Hence, a spinning motion may be initiated and acceleration of the fluid may result from the tapered shape of the hydrocyclone. This creates a shear-force that improves settling characteristics of particles by actions such as, e.g., destruction of filaments or displacement of interstitial or bound water. A change in the initial velocity and/or the

diameter (size) of the cyclone may result in the selection of different separation rates of desired solids fractions, or conversely results in overflow of non-desirables.

[0059] For example, a pair of hydrocyclones may be installed in the waste sludge line of the system 200 (or 300) and configured for a wasting rate of, e.g., about 20 m³/hr each. The pressure may be set to, e.g., about 1.7 bar. An online pressure sensor (not shown) may be included in the system 200 (or 300), which may provide a control signal for the frequency drive of, e.g., a pump (not shown), which may also be included in the system 200 (or 300). The underflow nozzle(s) in the system 200 (or 300) may have a diameter of, e.g., about 25mm, thereby reducing any likelihood of vulnerability to clocking. FIG. 4 show SVI (mL/g) versus time charts for this example.

[0060] According to another example, a plurality of cyclones (e.g., a battery of seven cyclones) may be installed in the system 200 (or 300). Each of the cyclones may be configured for a flow rate of 5m³/hr. The pressure may be set to, e.g., about 2.1 bar and the diameter of the underflow-nozzle(s) may be set to, e.g., about 22mm. The system 200 (or 300) may include one or more inline sieves of, e.g., about 5mm width to protect the cyclone(s) from clogging. FIG. 6 shows an SVI (mL/g) versus time charge for this example.

[0061] Centrifuge separation often occurs using a solid bowl centrifuge, where an increase in rpm of the centrifuge (e.g., in the range of 500 – 5000 rpm) increases the gravitational force and thus the settling rate. Accordingly, if the gravimetric selector 11 includes a centrifuge that has a bowl, scroll and pond sections, the centrifuge may expose the liquid-solid mixture in the gravimetric selector 11 to many times the gravitational

force that may occur, e.g., in a settling tank. A very small differential rpm (e.g., usually in the range of 1-10 rpm) between the bowl and the centrifuge scroll in the centrifuge can be used to separate the better settling solids from the poorer settling solids that are discharged in the overflow pond section of the centrifuge. Accordingly, by controlling hydraulic loading rate, centrifuge rotational speed, bowl/scroll differential rpm, and managing these rates between predetermined thresholds, the selection of larger and/or more dense solids may be controlled. For example, an increase in the hydraulic loading rate or bowl/scroll differential rpm may improve election of larger and/or more dense solids, while a decrease in these rates may help to increase retention time available for gravimetric separation, and a balanced rate may be used to manage the process. The solids in the pond section are wasted and the heavier scrolled solids can be retained and returned to the processor 6.

[0062] An important characteristic of the gravimetric selector 11 is its capability of using an aggressive overflow rate to retain good settling solids in separate equipment associated with a solids waste stream. These good settling solids tend to be both more dense and larger, with the better settling being based on Stokian settling which allows for rapid removal of the material in the gravimetric selector 11. Another important characteristic is the selective removal of smaller particles and colloids from the liquid/liquid-solid mixture that have the potential to cause MBR membrane fouling and/or turbidity in effluent 10, and induce membrane air diffuser fouling in, e.g., the processor 6.

[0063] U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2013/0001160 discloses a method for the biological purification of ammonium-containing wastewater, which is hereby incorporated herein in its entirety. The disclosed method provides gravimetric separation (e.g., using a hydrocyclone, a centrifuge, or sedimentation) of heavy sludge phase containing slow-growing anaerobic ammonia oxidizing bacteria (ANAMMOX) from light sludge phase and returning the heavy sludge phase to the aeration reactor treating ammonia containing wastewater while feeding light phase sludge to a digester for gas production.

[0064] FIGS. 4 – 6 illustrate improvements in the sludge settling properties resulting from implementation of the principles of the disclosure, including implementation of the system 200 (shown FIG. 2) or 300 (shown in FIG. 3). The sludge volume index (SVI) represents the volume of a sludge blanket settled for 30 minutes in a test cylinder normalized to one gram of solids and is a standard measure of settleability. Often a SVI greater than 150 mL/g is an indicator of poor settleability of sludge and an SVI less than 120 mL/gm, and preferably less than or equal to 100 mL/gm is an indicator of good settleability. Settleability of sludge determines the maximum mixed liquor solids operation that can be operated in an activated sludge plant. Even at many well operated treatment plants, the settling performance tends to deteriorate during certain periods of the year e.g., typically at the end of the winter season.

[0065] As seen in FIGS. 4 – 6, the use of the gravimetric selector 11 provides and maintains a good settleability, such as, e.g., less than 120 mL/gm, and preferably less than or equal to about 100 mL/gm.

[0066] FIG. 4 shows a graph comparing the deterioration of sludge settling properties in the process of system 100 with the improved settling performance of the activated sludge processes of systems 200 and 300. This graph demonstrates the benefits of implementing the gravimetric selector 11 according to the principles of the disclosure. In particular, the graph illustrates a comparison of settling properties using the system 200 (or 300) as compared to the settling properties using the system 100 (shown in FIG. 1), which does not include the gravimetric selector 11. In particular, this graph displays results where a pair of cyclones are installed in the waste sludge line of the system, and where the cyclones are designed for a wasting rate of $20 \text{ m}^3/\text{hr}$ each at a pressure of 1.7 bar with a 25mm diameter underflow-nozzle, as noted earlier.

[0067] In FIG. 4, the graph compares the deterioration of sludge settling properties in the system during the winter-spring season (e.g., December 1 to May 30) for a three year period. As seen in the graph, although the SVI reached levels of up to about 190 mL/g at the end of the winter season, with the improved settling performance during the same period for the SVI remained below 100 mL/g using the system 200 (or 300).

[0068] FIGS. 5 and 6 show graphs comparing the deterioration of sludge settling properties at one process lane in a typical system with improved settling performance of a parallel lane in the system 200 (or 300). In particular, the graphs display results from a full-scale pilot test at the WWTP Glarnerland plant where a battery of 7 cyclones were installed, each designed for a flow rate of $5 \text{ m}^3/\text{hr}$. The design pressure was set to 2.1 bar and the diameter of the underflow-nozzle was set to 12 mm. An inline sieve of 5 mm width was installed to protect the cyclone from clogging. The results show comparison

of the deterioration of sludge settling properties (SVI over 900 ml/g) at one liquid process lane with the improved settling performance of the parallel lane during an experimental period (SVI remains constant around 100 mL/g). At the WWTP Glarnerland, the performance comparison appears more direct where one treatment train was operated without the gravimetric selector and the other parallel one was operated with a gravimetric selector as seen in system 200 (or 300) during the same period.

[0069] In FIG. 6, the graph also displays the results from a test at the WWTP Strass plant where a pair of cyclones were installed in the waste sludge line designed for a wasting of 20 m³/hr each. The design pressure was set to 1.7 bar and an online pressure sensor was included to provide the control signal for the frequency drive of the pump used in the system. Due to the size of the underflow-nozzle, which had a diameter of 25mm, no vulnerability to clogging was observed.

[0070] As evident from FIGS. 4-6, the application of the gravimetric selector 11 in system 200 (or 300) may mitigate the deterioration of settling performance that would otherwise occur and which would otherwise lead to operational problems and to a bottle-neck in design.

[0071] An activated sludge process may include a bioreactor that may be used for the treatment of wastewater. The activated sludge process may further include alternative processes for treatment of wastewater e.g., a granular process, an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process, an aerobic digestion process, an anaerobic digestion process, and so on. Any of these processes can be connected to a separation device utilizing gravimetric separation for the recycling or removal of biomass.

[0072] While the disclosure has been described in terms of exemplary embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the disclosure can be practiced with modifications in the spirit and scope of the appended claims. These examples are merely illustrative and are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible designs, embodiments, applications or modifications of the disclosure.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for selecting and retaining solids with superior settling characteristics, the method comprising:

feeding wastewater to an input of a processor that carries out a treatment process on the wastewater;

outputting processed wastewater at an output of the processor;

feeding the processed wastewater to an input of a gravimetric selector that selects solids with superior settling characteristics; and

outputting a recycle stream at a first output of the gravimetric selector.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

outputting a waste stream at a second output of the gravimetric selector to solids handling, where solids handling includes at least one thickening, stabilizing, conditioning, and dewatering.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

supplying the recycle stream from the first output of the gravimetric selector to the processor.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the recycle stream comprises solids with superior settling characteristics.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the waste stream is rejected and the recycle stream is returned to the processor.
6. The method of claim 4, wherein the waste stream comprises solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics or that have increased potential for membrane fouling.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the treatment process comprises:
- a suspended growth activated sludge process;
 - a granular process;
 - an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process;
 - a biological nutrient removal process;
 - an aerobic digestion process; or
 - an anaerobic digestion process.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the treatment process comprises a biological treatment process.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the biological treatment process comprises an in-line solid-liquid separation process.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the processor includes a membrane separator.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the processor comprises a cyclone that accelerates the wastewater and provides shear-force to the wastewater to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the processor comprises a centrifuge that provides centrifugal and shear force to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics in the wastewater.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein a feed rate to and a geometry of the cyclone are configured to adjust a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone to:

- select for larger or more dense solids; or
- increase the time available for separation in the cyclone.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the feeding the processed wastewater to the input of the gravimetric selector comprises:

- feeding the processed wastewater to an input of a separator that separates the wastewater into an underflow and effluent;
- receiving the underflow from the separator; and
- gravimetrically selecting solids with superior settling characteristics from the underflow and supplying the recycle stream to the first output.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
controlling a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone so that solids of a predetermined size or density are retained.
16. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
controlling a hydraulic loading rate to select settling solids of a predetermined size or density.
17. An apparatus that selects and retains solids with superior settling characteristics, the apparatus comprising:
a processor that comprises an input and an output, the processor being configured to carry out a treatment process; and
a gravimetric selector that comprises an input, a waste stream output and a recycle stream output,
wherein the recycle stream output of the gravimetric selector is coupled to the input of the processor.
18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the input of the gravimetric selector is coupled to the output of the processor.
19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the input of the gravimetric selector is coupled to an underflow output of a separator.

20. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the recycle stream output of the gravimetric selector supplies a recycle stream to the processor, the recycle stream comprising solids with superior settling characteristics.

21. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the treatment process comprises:

- a suspended growth activated sludge process;
- a granular process;
- an integrated fixed-film activated sludge process;
- a biological nutrient removal process;
- an aerobic digestion process; or
- an anaerobic digestion process.

22. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein processor comprises:

- a bioreactor.

23. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the bioreactor process comprises an in-line solid to liquid separation process.

24. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the processor comprises a cyclone that accelerates the wastewater and provides shear-force to the wastewater to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics.

25. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the processor comprises a centrifuge that provides centrifugal and shear force to separate solids with good settling characteristics from solids with poor settling and filtration characteristics in the wastewater.

26. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein a feed rate and a geometry of the cyclone are configured to adjust a velocity of the wastewater in the cyclone to:

select for larger or more dense solids; or

increase a time available for separation in the cyclone.

27. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:

a separator that has an input coupled to the output of the processor.

28. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the cyclone controls a velocity of the wastewater to adjust an overflow rate so that settling solids of a predetermined size or density are retained.

29. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the cyclone controls a hydraulic loading rate to select settling solids of a predetermined size or density.

30. A method for selecting and retaining solids with superior settling characteristics, the method comprising:

receiving wastewater from a wastewater supply;

processing the wastewater to provide processed wastewater;
gravimetrically selecting solids with settling characteristics from the processed wastewater; and
supplying the selected solids to a processor to further process the selected solids together with further wastewater received from the wastewater supply.