What is claimed is:

1. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having at least one opening in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and in fluid communication with the at least one opening of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly extending partially circumferentially around the base pipe having at least two circumferential terminuses defining a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap.

2. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media and wherein the circumferential gap is defined between a circumferential terminus of the first filter medium and a circumferential terminus of the second filter medium.

3. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second axially distributed filter media.

4. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

5. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least one transport tube and at least one packing tube having at least one slurry delivery nozzle.

6. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5 wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have rectangular cross sections.

7. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5 wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have non-rectangular cross sections.

8. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5 wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have cross sections selected from the group consisting of oval, kidney and arched.

9. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least two transport tubes and at least two packing tubes each having at least one slurry delivery nozzle.

10. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein a first portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and a second portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.

11. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having a plurality of openings in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly including at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media each in fluid communication with at least one of the openings of the base pipe, the first filter medium having a first circumferential terminus and the second filter medium having a second circumferential terminus such that the first and second circumferential terminuses define a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap.

12. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 10 further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

13. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 10 wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least one transport tube and at least one packing tube having at least one slurry delivery nozzle.

14. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 13 wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have cross sections selected from the group consisting of rectangular, oval, kidney and arched.

15. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 10 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein a first portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and a second portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.

16. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having at least one opening in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and in fluid communication with the at least one opening of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly extending partially circumferentially around the base pipe having at least two circumferential terminuses defining a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap, the slurry delivery subassembly including at least two transport tubes and at least two packing tubes each having at least one slurry delivery nozzle.

17. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 16 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media and wherein the circumferential gap is defined between a circumferential terminus of the first filter medium and a circumferential terminus of the second filter medium.

18. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 16 further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

19. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 16 wherein the transport tubes and the packing tubes have cross sections selected from the group consisting of rectangular, oval, kidney and arched.

20. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 16 wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein the transport tubes are at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and the packing tubes are at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.

What is claimed is:

1. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having at least one opening in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and in fluid communication with the at least one opening of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly extending partially circumferentially around the base pipe having at least two circumferential terminuses defining a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly is configured to deliver a slurry in the event of sand bridge formation to thereby improve gravel packing.

2. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media and wherein the circumferential gap is defined between a circumferential terminus of the first filter medium and a circumferential terminus of the second filter medium.

3. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in either claim 1 or 2, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second axially distributed filter media.

4. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of the preceding claims, further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

5. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least one transport tube and at least one packing tube having at least one slurry delivery nozzle to deliver the slurry.

6. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5, wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have rectangular cross sections.

7. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5, wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have non-rectangular cross sections.

8. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 5, wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have cross sections selected from the group consisting of oval, kidney and arched.

9. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least two transport tubes and at least two packing tubes, each of the at least two packing tubes having at least one slurry delivery nozzle to deliver the slurry.

10. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein a first portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and a second portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.

11. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having a plurality of openings in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly including at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media each in fluid communication with at least one of the openings of the base pipe, the first filter medium having a first circumferential terminus and the second filter medium having a second circumferential terminus such that the first and second circumferential terminuses define a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly is configured to deliver a slurry in the event of sand bridge formation to thereby improve gravel packing.

12. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 11 further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

13. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in either claim 11 or 12, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly further comprises at least one transport tube and at least one packing tube having at least one slurry delivery nozzle to deliver the slurry.

14. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 13, wherein the at least one transport tube and the at least one packing tube have cross sections selected from the group consisting of rectangular, oval, kidney and arched.

15. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of claims 10 to 14, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein a first portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and a second portion of the slurry delivery subassembly is at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.

16. A gravel packing apparatus comprising:

a base pipe having at least one opening in a sidewall portion thereof;

a fluid filtration subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and in fluid communication with the at least one opening of the base pipe, the fluid filtration subassembly extending partially circumferentially around the base pipe having at least two circumferential terminuses defining a circumferential gap therebetween; and

a slurry delivery subassembly positioned exteriorly of the base pipe and at least partially within the circumferential gap, the slurry delivery subassembly including at least two transport tubes and at least two packing tubes each having at least one slurry delivery nozzle, wherein the slurry delivery subassembly is configured to deliver a slurry in the event of sand bridge formation to thereby improve gravel packing.

17. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly further comprises at least first and second partially circumferentially extending filter media and wherein the circumferential gap is defined between a circumferential terminus of the first filter medium and a circumferential terminus of the second filter medium.

18. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in either claim 16 or 17, further comprising an outer shroud positioned exteriorly of the fluid filtration subassembly and the slurry delivery subassembly.

19. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein the transport tubes and the packing tubes have cross sections selected from the group consisting of rectangular, oval, kidney and arched.

20. The gravel packing apparatus as recited in any one of claims 16 to 19, wherein the fluid filtration subassembly has at least four circumferential terminuses defining first and second circumferential gaps therebetween and wherein the transport tubes are at least partially positioned within the first circumferential gap and the packing tubes are at least partially positioned within the second circumferential gap.