

## USING A GENERALIZED POWER LAW FOR SIMULATING THE FEEDBACK EFFECT OF DISSOLUTION/PRECIPITATION ON DIFFUSIVE TRANSFER IN TOUGHREACT

A. Burnol, F. Claret

BRGM (French Geological Survey)  
Water, Environment and Ecotechnology Division (D3E)  
3 avenue Claude-Guillemin - BP 36009  
45060 Orléans - France  
e-mail: a.burnol@brgm.fr

### **ABSTRACT**

In the case of variable porosity calculations (due to precipitation/dissolution in a calculation coupled with chemistry), the permeability and diffusion coefficients in different porous media vary with porosity. In the case of nuclear waste storage, solute transport is assumed to be diffusion-controlled, because of the extremely low permeability of surrounding materials, like concrete or clay. Various experiments and also different reactive transport modeling show a possible clogging due to the alkaline perturbation at the concrete/bentonite or concrete/clay interfaces (Gaucher et al., 2004; Burnol et al. 2006; Trotignon et al., 2007; De Windt et al., 2008). The decrease in porosity will therefore impact the extent of diffusion of all chemical elements, including radionuclides, through the engineered and geological barriers. Accounting for the feedback effect of porosity changes due to the chemical reactivity is therefore an important issue in simulating the migration of radionuclides out of the disposal drift. The chemical conditions found in deep nuclear waste storage raise some concern about the migration of radionuclides at the interface between the engineered and geological barriers, where the alkaline perturbation could cause a “clogging” and therefore could impact the diffusion-controlled process itself.

In this paper, we describe and test a new general “power law” which connects the effective diffusion coefficient and the porosity evolution. We conclude that if the version V1.0/V1.2 is used to study the diffusion of radionuclides in the surrounding zone of a waste nuclear disposal, the effective diffusion could be overestimated, even with the Millington Law. A modified version of TOUGHREACT with diffusion harmonic weighting gave the same results

as the HYTEC code, both in the case of weak feedback (power=1/3) or strong feedback (power=2) in the new “power law”. Note that the power law described in this paper is only verified for the aqueous phase, but the same kind of law has been developed for the gaseous phase in a two-phase system.

### **STATE OF ART AND THE NEW PROPOSED POWER LAW**

The law of Millington and Quirk (1961) is implemented in TOUGHREACT V1.0 (YMP Q V3.1). The user must set a “virtual” null value for the tortuosity parameter in the flow.inp file to introduce a so-called “tortuosity”  $\tau$  value equal to the porosity power 1/3. Under saturated conditions, the effective diffusion coefficient  $D_e$  is written as a product of the porosity  $\omega$ , the “tortuosity”  $\tau$  and the free-water diffusion  $D_0$  :

$$D_e = \omega \tau D_0, \quad \tau = (\omega)^{1/3} \quad (E1)$$

Some limits to this specific law are as follows: the porosity power 4/3 is not the experimental cementation factor for cementitious materials like the CEM I paste (Trotignon et al., 2007); it is not possible to consider different tortuosities if the feedback effect with the Millington law is taken into account. The effective diffusion coefficient may be very different between materials, e.g., about 2 orders of magnitude for chloride effective diffusion between clay and concrete (Trotignon et al., 2007). To overcome these limitations, and in the absence of better information on the physical characteristics of perturbed CEM I cement, MX80 bentonite, or Callovo-Oxfordian clay, a general power law similar to Archie’s law (Archie, 1942), as modified by Winsauer et al. (1952), has been chosen to describe the relation between the

effective diffusion and the porosity evolution (Lagneau, 2002):

$$D_e = \omega \tau D_0, \quad \tau = \left( \frac{\omega - \omega_{\min}}{\omega_o - \omega_{\min}} \right)^p \tau_0 \quad (E2)$$

with  $\omega_{\min}$ , the critical porosity under which diffusion is supposed to stop (percolation threshold), and p, the power coefficient (e.g., 0.3 for a nonconsolidated sand, 1.2 for a limestone, and 2 for a cement paste chosen by Trotignon et al. (2007)).

### **Test-Case I : Verification case for power coefficient p=1/3 (Millington and Quirk)**

In test-case I, the objective is not yet to validate the new law but only to verify that the old law (E1) is equivalent to the new law (E2) with a power 1/3 and with a tortuosity parameter in the new law within both media.

Two media with a different porosity in a 2m length 1D geometry were considered. The effective diffusion coefficients are initially very similar in both media, with the small differences only due to the difference in porosity. The physical characteristics of both media are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Physical parameters of both media.

Parameters	Medium I	Medium II
De (m <sup>2</sup> s <sup>-1</sup> )	2.92×10 <sup>-12</sup>	5×10 <sup>-12</sup>
ω <sub>0</sub> (-)	0.2	0.3
ω <sub>min</sub>	0	0
p	1/3	1/3
τ <sub>0</sub> (-)	0.585	0.669
Length, L (m)	1.05	1.05
Δx (m)	0.05	0.05

Initially, aqueous SrCl<sub>2</sub> (10<sup>-1</sup> mol kgw<sup>-1</sup>) and a nonreactive tracer (10<sup>-6</sup> mol kgw<sup>-1</sup>) were assumed present in Medium I, whereas only SO<sub>4</sub>Na<sub>2</sub> (10<sup>-1</sup> mol kgw<sup>-1</sup>) without tracer is assumed to be present in Medium II. The chemical parameters used for calculation are summarized in Table 2. Diffusion of the strontium and sulfate ions will lead to the precipitation of celestite (SrSO<sub>4</sub>) at the interface: SrSO<sub>4</sub>(s) = SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup> + Sr<sup>2+</sup> with log K = -6.632. In order to increase the porosity variation, and therefore the feedback effect of celestite precipitation on the

diffusion of the tracer, the precipitation is not treated under kinetic constraints, but rather at local equilibrium, and the molar volume of the solid phase is arbitrarily increased (10 L/mol instead of 46.25 cm<sup>3</sup>/mol).

Table 2. Chemical parameters of both media.

Parameters	Medium I	Medium II
pH	7	7
tracer (mol kgw <sup>-1</sup> )	10 <sup>-6</sup>	10 <sup>-20</sup>
Sr (mol kgw <sup>-1</sup> )	10 <sup>-1</sup>	10 <sup>-10</sup>
Cl (mol kgw <sup>-1</sup> )	5×10 <sup>-2</sup>	5×10 <sup>-9</sup>
S(6) (mol kgw <sup>-1</sup> )	10 <sup>-10</sup>	10 <sup>-1</sup>
Na (mol kgw <sup>-1</sup> )	5×10 <sup>-9</sup>	5×10 <sup>-2</sup>

The results are presented in Figure 1. As might be expected, (E1) and (E2) are rigorously equivalent if the tortuosity  $\tau_0 = (\omega_0)^{1/3}$  is chosen in the new law in both media (Table 1).

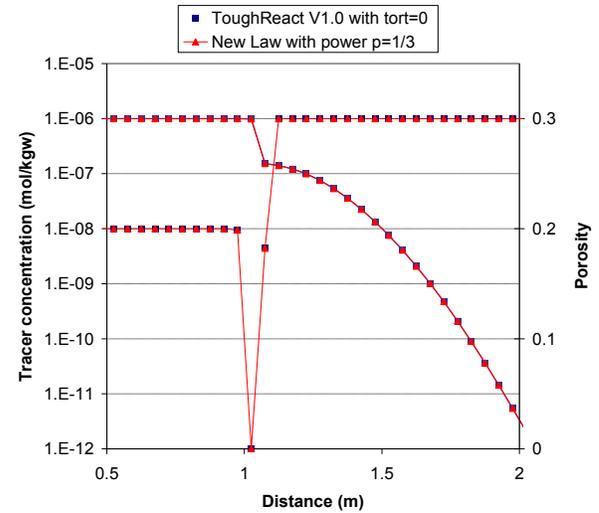


Figure 1. Porosity variation and tracer concentration after 10 years calculated with the old law (E1) and new law (E2).

### **Test-Case II: Comparison case of TOUGHREACT V1.0 with HYTEC V3.3 for weak (p=1/3) and strong (p=2) feedback**

The aim of Test-Case II is to compare the results of two different codes for different values of the power p. The results of V1.0 with the new law are compared with the results given by HYTEC 3.3, a French code (van der Lee et al., 2003) that is also able to simulate reactive transport with variable porosity.

The HYTEC retroaction law is the same as the power law described in Equation (E2). The physical parameters are the same parameters as in Test-Case I, except for the effective diffusion which is different by one order of magnitude at the interface.

For the boundary conditions, the 1D system is assumed closed with both codes, i.e., no mass flux at  $X=0$  m  $X=2$  m.

Table 3. Physical parameters of both media in Test-Case II (see Table 1 for the other parameters).

Parameters	Medium I	Medium II
$D_e$ ( $m^2 s^{-1}$ )	$10^{-12}$	$10^{-11}$
$\tau_0 D_0$ ( $m^2 s^{-1}$ )	$1/2 \times 10^{-11}$	$10/3 \times 10^{-11}$
$\omega_0$ (-)	0.2	0.3
$p$	1/3, 2	1/3, 2

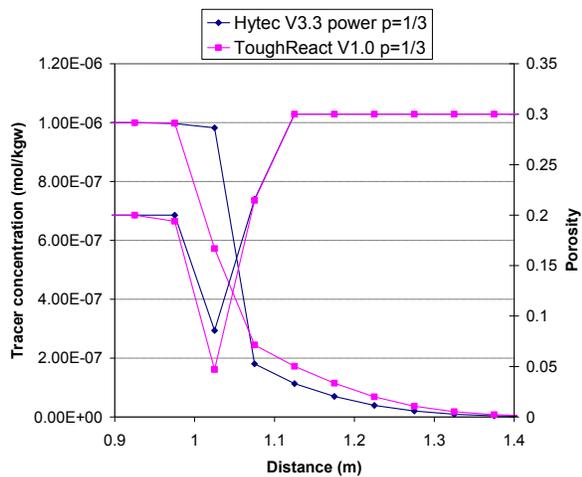


Figure 2. Comparison of tracer concentration and porosity after 10 years between TOUGHREACT V1.0 and HYTEC V3.3 with power  $p=1/3$ .

The parameter  $p$  is either fixed to  $1/3$  for a “weak” feedback or to  $2$  for a “strong” feedback. In both cases, there are significant differences between the results of the two codes (Figures 2 and 3).

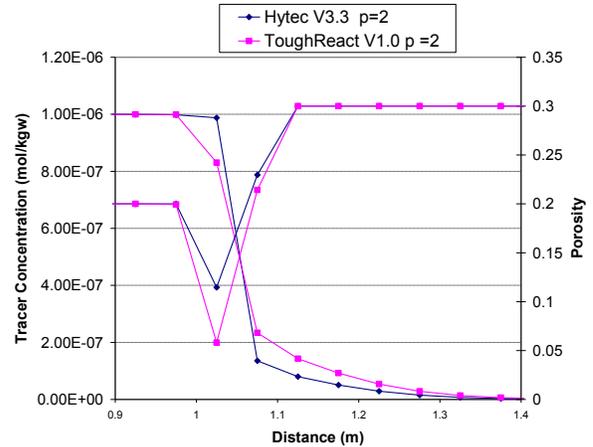


Figure 3. Comparison of tracer concentration and porosity after 10 years between V1.0 and HYTEC V3.3 with power  $p=2$ .

It is well known that for single-phase flow, the appropriate interface weighting scheme for the effective diffusion coefficient is a harmonic weighting. In TOUGHREACT V1.0, the effective diffusion at the interface is the product of  $D_0$  with two terms: the first term of (E1), i.e., the porosity  $\omega$ , is calculated as a harmonic mean at the interface, and the second term, i.e., the tortuosity  $\tau$ , is a weighted mean (the weights are the nodal distances from the interface).

A new version of TOUGHREACT with harmonic weighting of the effective diffusion coefficient at the interface, gives much better results, as shown in Figure 4.

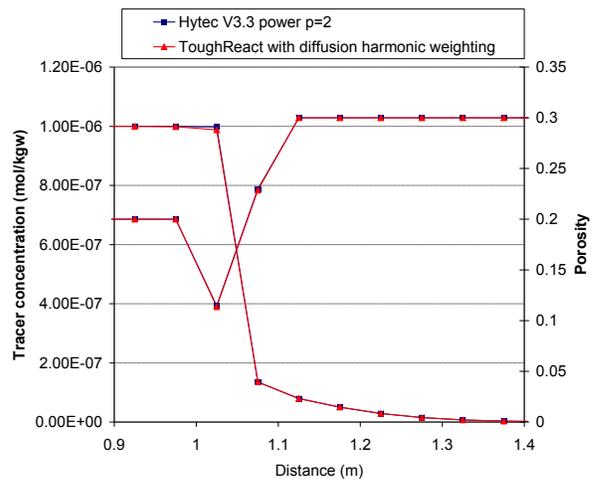


Figure 4. Same as for Figure 3 but with diffusion harmonic weighting (see text).

The interface diffusion coefficient calculation used in TOUGHREACT V1.0 is roughly valid without the feedback effect of porosity variation, departing from true diffusion values as porosity decreases, and the error in case of low or strong feedback could be significant, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

## **CONCLUSION**

The chemical conditions found in deep nuclear waste storage raise some concern about the migration of radionuclides at the interface between the engineered and geological barriers, where the alkaline perturbation could cause a “clogging” and therefore could impact the diffusion-controlled process itself.

In this study, we describe and test a new general “power law” that connects the effective diffusion coefficient and the porosity evolution. We conclude that if the TOUGHREACT version V1.0 is used to study the diffusion of radionuclides in the surrounding zone of a waste nuclear disposal, the effective diffusion could be overestimated even with the Millington Law. A modified version of TOUGHREACT with diffusion harmonic weighting gave the same results as the HYTEC code, both in the case of weak feedback (power=1/3) and strong feedback (power=2) in the new “power law”.

Note that the power law described in this paper is only verified for the aqueous phase, but the same kind of law has also been developed for the gaseous phase in a two-phase system.

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