# **Oil & Natural Gas Technology**

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## Quarterly Report October – December 2011 Post Retort, Pre Hydro-treat Upgrading of Shale Oil

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**Office of Fossil Energy** 

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#### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 9<sup>th</sup> quarter considerable progress was made. A presentation was made at the Oil Shale Symposium titled, "Novel process for shale oil upgrading without using hydrogen". The presentation was well attended and raised awareness of the technology. Reactor experiments were conducted on coker diesel which contained refractory nature sulfur compounds originally in coke with 1.8% sulfur content, nearly 98% sulfur was removed. Also bitumen from the McKay River in Alberta was processed under various conditions which had an initial API of about 8 and starting sulfur content 5.1%. Up to 97% of the sulfur was removed and API was increased to 19, and TAN was reduced from 5 to 0. These are encouraging results both for refinery stream processing as well as pre-processing feedstocks which may be sent to the USA by pipeline. Meanwhile the electrolysis process is still looking very encouraging. The long term test cell has longed over 5000 hours with no apparent membrane degradation. The program is expected to have funds remaining at the scheduled program end so a no cost extension has been requested.

#### 2. PROGRESS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 2.1 Task 1.0 -- Project Management Plan

The PMP was updated within 30 days and submitted to the Project Manager (Quarter 1).

#### 2.2 Task 2.0 -- Upgrading Development

It is explained in detail in 6<sup>th</sup> Quarterly report.

#### 2.3 Task 3.0 -- Electrolysis Development

It is explained in detail in 6<sup>th</sup> Quarterly report.

#### 2.4 Task 4.0 -- Analysis

It is explained in detail in 6<sup>th</sup> Quarterly report.

#### **Budget Period 2**

#### 2.5 Task 5.0 – Upgrading Development

This task is related to developing the process of treating shale oil, or heavy oil at elevated temperature and pressure in the presence of an alkali metal, either sodium or lithium and also a hydrogen source, either hydrogen gas or methane (natural gas) to form an oil stream with reduced levels of sulfur, nitrogen and heavy metals and also in the process reducing the viscosity and increasing the API gravity. The object here is to determine the impact of various reaction parameters on product quality.

#### 2.5.1 Subtask 5.1 – Analytical Capability

*Analytical laboratory set up* There are no major changes in analytical capability.

#### 2.5.2 Subtask 5.2 – Upgrading reactor and Separation setup

Additional experiments were performed with bitumen and Coker diesel as feedstocks. The bitumen specifications are shown in Table 1 below.

#### Table 1: Specifications of Bitumen

С	Н	Ν	S	API	TAN	Ni	V	Fe
83.7	10.03	0.4	5.1	7.97	5.2	77	213	3

The various different runs are listed in Table 2 below. The results of the runs are shown in Table 3. As observed from the Table, 96.5% sulfur was removed from the bitumen (Run B1) in presence of hydrogen whereas methane as a cover gas resulted into maximum 88.6% sulfur removal (Run B4). API of the upgraded product was 19 and 17 respectively. It can be concluded that, hydrogen as a cover gas is more effective at upgrading compared to methane.

#### Table 2: List of upgrading experiments for Bitumen

Run ID	Gas	Actual Na/ Theore- tical Na	Reaction Time	Reactor Pressure	Reactor Temp.
			Min.	Psig.	С
B1	H2	0.98	127	1049	391
B2	CH4	0.63	123	1324	395
B3	H2	1.01	39	1136	383
B4	CH4	1.00	40	1431	403
B5	H2	1.08	245	980	385

#### Table 3: Results of Bitumen upgrading

D	Sulfur	Re-	Nitro-	Liquid	API	Hydrogen	Light ends
Run	moved		genkern	Fraction		Consumption	(CI-C6)
ID			oved	Mass			Formed
				Yield			
	%		%	%		scf/barrel	scf/barrel
B1	96.5%		43.5%	89.1%	19.1	335.5	153.9
B2	76.2%		26.8%	91.4%	13.0	N/A	145.2
B3	63.6%		5.4%	91.6%	13.0	114.4	154.6
B4	88.6%		28.5%	73.2%	17.0	N/A	206.4
B5	95.6%		12.9%	84.1%	16.8	193.1	154.6

#### Sulfur Removal from Coker Diesel

Coker diesel was treated in the upgrading reactor with Nitrogen and hydrogen as cover gases respectively. The initial coker diesel has a sulfur content of 1.8%. The experiments were performed at 275 C and 450 psig gas pressure.

Table 4 shows the detailed results. The sodium charge was approximately 6 g. The results show upto 97.7% sulfur removal using hydrogen as a cover gas. With nitrogen as a cover gas, up to 90% sulfur was removed.

Run ID	un Gas Actual Na/ Theoretical Na		Sulfur Removed	Liquid Frac- tion Mass Yield	API
			%	%	
CR1	N2	1.10	83.2	88.5	35.20
CR2	N2	1.07	90.3	86.05	35.24
CR3	N2	1.10	94.1	85.2	35.31
CR4	H2	0.66	72.4	94.5	33.12
CR5	H2	0.94	90.4	92.5	34.46
CR6	H2	1.16	97.7	89.8	35.79

 Table 4: Results of Coker diesel desulfurization

Additional flow meters, and data loggers were installed to provide better mass balance data and monitoring of process parameters during runs.

#### 2.6 Task 6.0 - Electrolysis development

To reduce the overall cost of the upgrading process, an electrolysis process will be developed to regenerate sodium or lithium from the respective polysulfide. The process will feature ceramic ion conductive membranes developed at Ceramatec. The energy cost to regenerate the alkali metals from the polysulfide is expected to be about half that of producing the metals from their respective chlorides.

#### 2.6.1 Subtask 6.1 – Membrane fabrication

The Recipient shall fabricate and characterize sodium conductive and lithium conductive membranes.

#### 2.6.2 Subtask 6.2 – Seal testing

Ceramatec shall evaluate various seal approaches for compatibility with the alkali metal and the metal polysulfide at various temperatures.

#### 2.6.3 Subtask 6.3 – Cell design and set up

Ceramatec shall design benchtop cells for two types of operation, one where the alkali metal is molten and one where it plates onto a current collector. Reactors and catholyte transfer means will be provided to prepare alkali metal sulfide of differing composition and transfer to the cell. The cells will be designed to accommodate multiple reference electrodes, operate at various elevated temperatures. The cells will have features designed to facilitate sulfur removal and be designed to operate within a dry enclosure.

#### 2.6.4 Subtask 6.4 – Cell operation

The Recipient shall operate cells under various conditions including variation of the current density, electrode gap, temperature, electrolyte, polysulfide order, and alkali metal. Current will

be measured as a function of applied voltage. Periodically cell operation will be interrupted and cell contents analyzed to determine current efficiency. In Phase 1 the alkali metal polysulfide will be synthesized from alkali metal and sulfur and will not contain appreciable impurities which may flow through from an actual upgrading process as will occur in Phase 2.

#### Long term test cell results

One cell has been operated as long term test during this reporting period. Table 5 summarizes the properties of the cell. Sodium polysulfide  $(Na_2S_4)$  is periodically added to the anolyte solution in the cell to replenish the sodium as the ions are transported and reduced to sodium metal in the cathode. Cell *Na\_molten\_20110504* has been in continuous operation for 5044 hours (210 days) at a constant current density of 60 mA/cm<sup>2</sup>. Figure 1 shows the cell voltage and the Open Circuit Voltage (OCV) during the test. The average cell voltage for the run is equal to 3.10V. The cell's Nersnt potential or OCV (Open Circuit Voltage) varied between 2.1 and 2.3V, with an average around 2.2V. Table 6 summarizes the cell's key metrics. A total of 1933 grams of sodium tetrasulfide Na2S4 has been added to the cell, from which 442 grams of sodium have been recovered. This represents approximately 86.5% of the total sodium added as sodium polysulfide to the cell.

As documented in past quarterly reports, we have detected small amounts hydrogen sulfide gas being generated in the cell. Since the cells are operated inside a glove box in a dry nitrogen environment, we have speculated that the gas comes from electrochemical decomposition reactions between the anolyte solvent and the sodium polysulfide. Aging of the anolyte solvent is evident as the test goes on and it is manifested as an increase in viscosity and in the reduction of the ionic conductivity. This explains the slow but steady increase in the cell operating voltage with each new anolyte, as shown in Figure 1. We have measured the sulfur composition of the anolyte solution during the test. Figure 2 compares the total cumulative sulfur added and the total sulfur measured, expressed as weight percent of the anolyte solution, during the long term test with Anolyte #4. The difference between the sulfur added and the sulfur measured is equal to the sulfur lost as  $H_2S$  gas plus the elemental sulfur, which precipitates out of the analyte solution. The figure indicates that it takes approximately 240 hours (after adding fresh analyte solution) to reach a 46% difference between sulfur added and measured. Then, this difference is maintained for the remaining of the anolyte life. If we discount the amount of elemental sulfur recovered from the anolyte after separation, the sulfur loses account for 37% of the total sulfur added. A total of six anolyte solutions (five replacements) have been used so far during the 5044 hours of the test. After replacing the anolyte, the cell voltage decreases every time to a value similar to that of the beginning of the test. This is proof of the good condition of the membrane since little or no over potential due to the NaSICON solid electrolyte has been measured.

In the next quarter, sodium tetrasulfide  $(Na_2S_4)$  will be replaced with sodium sulfide  $(Na_2S)$  in the long term test cell.

Table 5: Summary of sodium	recovery test cells	s run in long-term moo	le
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Cell ID#	Anolyte	Anode Electrode	Membrane	Catholyte	Cathode Electrode	Seal Type	Operating Conditions
Na Recovery Cell 20110504	Na2S4 in MF	Platinized Ti mesh (1.1" diam.)	NaSICON GY (1 mm thick, 0.8" diam.)	Molten Na	Molten Na, Ti rod current collector	Silica-Boria Glass	Temperature=130C Anolyte agitation Cte Current=60 mA/cm^2

Table 6: Summary of performance of sodium recovery test cells run in long-term mode at 60 mA/cm2 current density

Cell ID	Total Run Time	Avg. Voltage	Avg. OCV	Number of Anolyte Solution Replacements	Total Na <sub>2</sub> S <sub>4</sub> Added	Na Recovered		Notes
	Hours (days)	V	V		g	g	% out of Na added	
Na Recovery Cell 20110504	5044 <sup>*</sup> (210)	3.10	2.20	5	1933	442	86.5	Cell is still in operation with mem- brane in excellent conditions

\* Total time includes short time periods to measure the cell OCV



Figure 1: Cell voltage at 60 mA/cm2 and Open Circuit Voltage (OCV) versus run time for sodium recovery cell Na\_molten\_20110504. Run time includes time periods for OCV measurements (no current).



Figure 2: Comparison between total sulfur added and measured for Anolyte #4 during long term test for cell Na Recovery Cell 20110504

#### Sodium recovery test cells results using solids from processed oil samples:

A sample of Coker Diesel feedstock was procured in this quarter. A total of six upgrading tests, using sodium and hydrogen or nitrogen as covered gas, were planned and conducted. The reaction was done at a temperature and pressure of 280°C and 425 psig, respectively. At the end of the reaction batch time, the reaction products were decanted to separate the solid and liquid fractions. The solids were washed with hexane to dissolve the remaining oil and then centrifuged to separate the washed solids from the liquid. The washed solids were dried at 80°C to evaporate the remaining hexane solvent. Figure 3 shows pictures of the dried solids for four of the runs (CR2, CR3, CR4, and CR5). CR2 and CR3 were run using nitrogen as covered gas, whereas CR4 and CR5 used hydrogen. There is a clear difference in color and composition between the two set of solids. While they all have sodium sulfide (Na<sub>2</sub>S), the amount of sulfide in the hydrogen run solid samples is significantly higher. Moreover, the higher carbon content of the nitrogen run solid samples evidences the larger extent of thermal cracking that occurs when hydrogen gas is not present. The electrolyte solution for the electrolysis runs is prepared by dissolving the dried solids in our preferred polar organic solvent. The electrolyte solutions obtained from the hydrogen runs had higher ionic conductivities and were less viscous than the solutions from the nitrogen runs. A total of four cells were assembled and run during the reporting period (see Table 7). Figure 4 shows the cell voltage and the current density versus test elapsed time for cell *Coker\_Diesel\_CR2\_20111108.* The cell was run in constant voltage mode, initially at 3V for 10 hours and then at 3.5V for the remaining of the 140 hr test. A maximum current density of 30 mA/cm<sup>2</sup> was only achieved at 3.5V, with a significant cell deactivation as shown by the quick current density drop in Figure 4. Test cells *Coker\_Diesel\_CR4\_2011110, Coker\_Diesel\_CR5\_20111111, and Coker\_Diesel\_CR6\_20111116* run much better reaching and maintaining in all cases the optimum current density of 60 mA/cm<sup>2</sup>. However cell deactivation, as evidenced by carbon rich deposits on the surface of the anode electrode, was still observed towards the end of the runs.



Figure 3: Picture of the dried solid samples of two nitrogen Coker Diesel runs (CR2, CR3) and two Coker Diesel hydrogen runs (CR4, CR5)

Table 7: Sodium recovery test cells, using solids from processed Coker Diesel runs, assembled and tested during the reporting period

Cell ID#	Anolyte	Anode Electrode	Membrane	Catholyte	Cathode Electrode	Cell Operating Conditions
Coker_Diesel_CR2_20111108	273.6 g of solution with 6.8 wt.% solids in MF	Platinized Ti mesh (1" diameter, 3 mm from membrane)	NaS GY pressed disk (0.51 mm thick) Active area=1.86 cm/2	Molten Na	Ti rod current collector	Temperature=130C Cte Votage=3-3.5V
Coker_Diesel_CR4_20111110	238.6 g of 4.1 wt% CR4 solids in MF	Platinized Ti mesh (1" diameter, 3 mm from membrane)	NaS GY pressed disk (1 mm thick) Active area=1.84 cm/2	Molten Na	Ti rod current collector	Temperature=130C Cte Current=60 mA/cm <sup>2</sup> Cte Votage=3.5V
Coker_Diesel_CR5_20111111	Added 14.3 g of CR5 solids to anolyte of <i>Coker_Diesel_CR4_201</i> <i>11110</i> Cell. 5.8% wt. solids solution in MF	Platinized Ti mesh (1" diameter, 3 mm from membrane)	NaS GY pressed disk (1 mm thick) Active area=1.84 cm/2	Molten Na	Ti rod current collector	Temperature=130C Cte Current=60 mA/cm^2 Cte Votage=3.5V
Coker_Diesel_CR6_20111116	314.9 g of 5.4wt% CR6 solids in MF	Platinized Ti mesh (1" diameter, 3 mm from membrane)	NaS GY pressed disk (0.41 mm thick) Active area=2.0 cm/2	Molten Na	Ti rod current collector	Temperature=130C Cte Current=60 mA/cm <sup>2</sup> Cte Votage=3.5V



Figure 4: Cell voltage and current density versus elapsed time for sodium recovery test cell Coker\_Diesel\_CR2\_20111108

#### Task 7.0 – Analysis

#### Subtask 7.1 – Develop electrolysis process model

Ceramatec shall analyze data from Task 3 and a performance model will be developed. Various factors such as membrane thickness, type of alkali metal, electrode configuration and cell design would be included in the model considerations.

#### Subtask 7.2 – Preliminary cost analysis

The Recipient shall incorporate the models from Subtasks 4.1 and 4.2 into a preliminary cost model. Based on the preliminary cost analysis, a selection will be made between sodium and lithium as the most promising alkali metal for further pursuit in Phase 2. Sodium was selected because of higher efficiency of removing sulfur and lower cell voltage in electrolysis compared to Lithium.

#### 3. CONCLUSION

Our conclusion at this point is that high levels of both sulfur and nitrogen can be removed from shale oil, heavy oil, coker diesel and bitumen with the process tested. Both methane and hydrogen are effective in removal of sulfur, nitrogen, heavy metals, and increasing API gravity.

#### 4. COST STATUS

The projected costs stated in the Project Management Plan and the monthly costs of the  $9^{th}$  quarter are shown in Table 12, along with the projected costs stated in the Project Management Plan.

#### Table 8: Project costing profile for the 9th Quarter

Note: Benefits, Overhead, & G&A rates char		Oct-11		Nov-11		Dec-11		Q9		
			Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual
Direct Labor				31,996.53		28,543.54		29,094.80		89,634.87
Benefits	29.76%	30%		9,522.17		8,494.56		8,658.61		26,675.34
Overhead	43.71%	44%		13,985.68		12,476.38		12,717.34		39,179.40
Total Burdened Labor				55,504.38		49,514.48		50,470.75		155,489.61
Direct Materials / Spec Test				7,013.98		15,124.03		14,900.75		37,038.76
Equipment								-		-
Consulting				16,864.08		9,885.84		13,374.96		
Travel				119.00		4,737.06		1,915.00		6,771.06
Subtotal				79,501.44		79,261.41		80,661.46		239,424.31
G&A	31.44%	31%		24,995.25		24,919.78		25,359.96		75,274.99
Total monthly			-	104,496.69	-	104,181.19	-	106,021.42	-	314,699.30

Figure 5 shows a plot of the total monthly costs and the initially projected costs versus time and Figure 6 shows the cumulative monthly costs versus time. Also shown in the figure is the fraction of actual over planned cumulative expenses.



Figure 5: Projected and actual monthly costs over time



Figure 6: Projected and actual cumulative costs over time

#### 5. MILESTONE STATUS

New milestones need to be set for the current Budget Period.

#### Table 9: Milestone log for 6rd Quarter

Mile ston e No.	Task / Sub- task	Project Milestone Description	Planned Start Date:	Planned End Date:	Actual Start Date:	Actual End Date:	Comments
1	1	Updated PMP	9/29/09	10/29/09	9/29/09	10/26/09	
2	2.1	Analytic capability established	9/29/09	3/1/10	9/29/09	3/23/10	Analytical capability has been established as stated in the PMP. Operators have been trained on GC. ICP and CHNS are operational
3	2.2	Complete upgrading exp. Setup	9/29/09	3/29/09	9/29/09	3/26/10	Upgrading set-up has been completed including HAZOP and pre-start up safety re- view. The reactor set up has been ready to be operational as of Friday, March 26, 2010.
4	2.3	Complete process runs	3/30/10	1/3/11	3/26/10	3/31/11	Process runs underway
5	3.1.1	Complete membranes for Phase 1	9/29/09	7/5/10	9/29/09	9/20/10	Membrane fabrication has exceeded demand for fabri- cation. Mechanical character- ization was complete on Sep- tember 20, 2010.
6	3.3	Cells ready for opera- tion	4/13/10	2/28/11	4/13/10	3/31/11	Cells were ready for opera- tion on time. Initial cells test- ing began running 4/26/10 when sufficient sodium poly- sulfide was synthesized.
7	4.3	Preliminary cost model complete	2/8/11	3/14/11	1/4/11	3/18/11	A preliminary cost model was completed and reviewed in- ternally. Adjustments were recommended by the review- ers and additional cases sug- gested for updated cost mod- els.

#### 6. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Electrolysis of sodium sulfide at temperatures of molten sodium have begun and are showing very encouraging results.
- Reactor tests with methane have continued with encouraging results
- Process models of both the reactor and electrolysis processes have begun which will lead to the preliminary cost model.
- Additional input and output measurement has improved the accuracy of mass balances
- Electrolysis of Na2S4 has exceeded 5000 hours at the target current density and temperature.
- The technology has been demonstrated on multiple feedstocks of different origins: Shale Oil, Heavy Oil, Bitumen (Oil Sands), and Coker Diesel

#### 7. PROBLEMS OR DELAYS

No problems to report at this time.

#### 8. **PRODUCTS**

No products to report at this time.

#### 9. LIST OF APPENDICES

None

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