January 14, 1997

Dr. Marshall Reed
U.S. Department of Energy
Forrestal Bldg, EE-122
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Dr. Reed,

Enclosed is the final summary for the geothermal research program update for Task Order No. 6, Subcontract C85-110656 with the University of Nevada, Reno. The DOS disk contains WordPerfect 5.1 files for the document (annsum.w51) and table (table1.w51), as well as an autocad file for the figure (nevada.dwg).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Lisa Shevenell

cc: Dr. Joel Renner
Dr. Alex Moore
January 13, 1997

Dr. Alex Moore
Princeton Economic Research, Inc. (PERI)
1700 Rockville Pike, Suite 550
Rockville, MD 20852

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Lisa Shevenell

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GEOCHEMICAL MODELING OF PRODUCING GEOTHERMAL RESOURCES IN NEVADA: CALIBRATION AND TESTING OF THE DOE BRINE CHEMISTRY MODELS GEOFLUID AND TEQUIL

Ted De Rocher and Lisa Shevenell
University of Nevada, Reno

KEY WORDS
SCALE PREDICTION, GEOTHERMAL FLUIDS, ROCK/WATER INTERACTION, AQUEOUS GEOCHEMICAL MODELS

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND STATUS
Carbonate, sulfate, silicate, or metal sulfide scales have the potential to build up during energy extraction at all Great Basin geothermal resources. These problems range from calcium carbonate scale formation in non-pumped production wells to stibnite deposition in binary heat exchangers. Although various chemical additive strategies such as inhibitors and crystallizers are available to help control scaling problems, these methods generally require substantial cost in chemicals, additional equipment, and maintenance. Because of this expense, it is important to fully assess both the nature and the magnitude of the scaling potential anticipated during geothermal energy production and the effectiveness of various strategies to mitigate the problems.

The DOE Geothermal Division has supported the development of the computer models GEOFLUID and TEQUIL, which have demonstrated the ability to accurately reproduce the measured laboratory behavior of simple brines, the solubility and liquid / vapor coexistence of gases, and other thermodynamic properties of aqueous systems (Weare, 1987; Moller, 1988; Duan et al., 1992b). In addition to modeling mineral-brine behavior, these programs (developed by the University of California San Diego Chemical Modeling Group (UCSD CMG)), also have the capability to predict the behavior of gas phases of most compositions associated with geothermal formations (Duan et al., 1992a; Duan et al., 1992c). A summary of this computer modeling project is included in this volume of the Research Program Update.

These calibrated and field tested models should provide the geothermal industry with:
* A cost effective method of predicting production problems related to brine chemistry during the resource site assessment phase
* A method of identifying causes of chemical scaling problems in systems already in operation
* An inexpensive means for testing strategies to abate these problems
* A tool for simulating brine behavior for optimal plant performance.

Work on the current project began in April 1995 and the anticipated completion date is
11/30/97. To date, duplicate samples have been collected over two field seasons for chemical analysis from production wells located at Beowawe, Bradys, Desert Peak, Dixie Valley, Empire, Soda Lake, Steamboat Terrace, Steamboat Hills, and Stillwater (Figure 1). Production fluids were sampled using a mini-steam separator and a condenser coil (Giggenbach and Goguel, 1989). One representative production well was sampled at the power plants utilizing flashed-steam technology. Binary power plants were sampled at both the entrance and exit of a single heat exchanger. Separated water and condensed steam and gas samples were sent to Los Alamos National Laboratory for analysis. Separated water and condensed steam samples were analyzed for the following constituents: Al, Ar, B, Br, Ca, Cl, CO₃, Cs, Fe, F, HCO₃, K, Li, Mg, Mn, Na, NH₄, NO₃, pH, PO₄, Rb, Sb, Si, SO₄, S₂O₃, Sr, and TDS. Evaluation of the results of these analyses began in December, 1995, and continues with the most recent analysis. Deuterium and oxygen-18 isotope analyses were performed on separated water and condensed steam samples. Condensed steam and non-condensible gas samples were analyzed for NH₄, Ar, CO₂, He, H, H₂S, CH₄, N, and O.

Wellbore scale samples have been obtained from several facilities during well clean-out/milling operations, or scraped from downhole chemical injection tubing. If available, mineral scale samples were selected from the uppermost and lowest depths of scale formation and at the depth of maximum scale accumulation, for a total of three samples per well. In the 23-5 well at the Caithness site, wellbore scale occurs between a depth of 1,800 feet and the surface, with maximum scale formation occurring at 1,600 feet. This type of information is not available at all of the sites. Binary plants utilize pumped production wells and scale does not deposit in the wellbore. At these sites, scale samples were collected from the heat exchangers during maintenance cleaning periods when the scale was mechanically removed from the exchanger tubing. Chemical analysis of the scale samples show the following preliminary trend: Ca/MgCO₃ and SiO₂ complexes in unpumped flash-plant production wells; SiO₂ and aluminosilicate complexes in pumped flash-plant injection wells; and metal sulfide (predominantly antimony sulfide) complexes in the later heat-exchanger stages of binary power plants.

Preliminary modeling of injection fluid chemistry has begun. TEQUIL is being used to predict potential mineral precipitation with additional cooling.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

* The objective of this project is to enhance the cost-effective utilization and development of Great Basin geothermal resources through the calibration and refinement of the GEOFLUID and TEQUIL geochemical models.

Technical Objectives

* The models will be applied to data collected from several geothermal power plants in Nevada in order to field calibrate the models and improve their ability to provide reliable predictions of chemical behavior in geothermal fields.
Expected Outcomes
* In their current state of development, the GEOFLUID and TEQUIL models should have the capability to describe the chemical behavior of Ca, Na, Cl, CO$_3$, HS, H$_2$S, and H$_2$O present in Great Basin geothermal brines. Based on the models' excellent predictive capability of experimental brines, it is anticipated that the models will simulate scaling problems in real systems.

* Prior knowledge of anticipated scaling problems will allow operators to consider alternative production scenarios to minimize cost associated with scale abatement.

It is hypothesized that:
* The GEOFLUID and TEQUIL models can be used successfully to predict existing mineral scale deposition at geothermal power production facilities;
* The GEOFLUID and TEQUIL models can be effectively applied to the analysis of existing scale deposition, and used as a tool to explore alternate production and injection strategies.

**APPRAOCH**

The solution, solid, and gas phase chemistry models GEOFLUID and TEQUIL will be applied to water and gas chemistry data collected from nine geothermal power plants across Nevada (Figure 1). Condensed steam and separated water samples were obtained from production wells and mineral scale samples have been gathered from wellbores in non-pumped fields and from the heat exchangers in binary plants. These data will be used to field calibrate the models and improve their ability to provide reliable predictions of the chemical behavior of the resource (potential for scaling and gas breakout) under a variety of conditions. The calibrated models will provide operators and engineers with the ability to rapidly analyze potential scaling and to test strategies for problem abatement and resource enhancement.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

Trace mercury analysis of collected water samples revealed fluids are not fully mixed in production lines. Non-condensible gases stratify at the top of the gathering line significantly affecting geothermal fluid chemistry (Table 1)(Gustin and De Rocher, unpublished data). Gas samples should be collected from the top of the line, while water samples should be collected from both the bottom and mid-section of the line. This finding resulted in modification to the sampling of two-phase geothermal fluid methodology proposed by ASTM E1675-95.

Preliminary modeling of injection fluid chemistry at all sites has begun. TEQUIL is being used to predict potential mineral precipitation with additional cooling. Results to date closely approximate silica deposition present at some geothermal fields. For example, at the Caithness 23-5 well, the depth at which CO$_2$ is predicted to evolve from the geothermal fluid is 1,750 feet, which is near the observed 1,800 foot depth of the bottom of scale formation in this well.
FUTURE PLANS
Mineral scales will be mineralogically analyzed using x-ray diffraction at the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, University of Nevada, Reno.

Computer simulations of scale formation will be completed for each site using GEOFLUID and TEQUIL. Model results will be compared to known conditions, and the performance of GEOFLUID and TEQUIL will be evaluated. Further simulations will be conducted covering a range of brine temperatures and pressures. A discussion of the chemical behavior of the geothermal brine will be conducted for all production fields. Selected sites will be compared for optimal operational conditions and predicted mineral solubility problems in a discussion of the hydrogeochemistry of Nevada’s moderate-temperature geothermal fluids.

INDUSTRY INTEREST AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER
After project completion, the results of this Great Basin modeling effort will be communicated to the geothermal industry. The calibrated computer model should provide geothermal developers and operators with a tool capable of predicting gypsum-anhydrite, carbonate, and silica scaling in geothermal systems, and assist in the design of optimum production strategies which would minimize production costs. The final results will be useful to all geothermal plant operators exploiting moderate-temperature resources, and particularly to the companies noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type and Extent of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxbow</td>
<td>Site specific data, predictive capabilities of model</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Beowawe, Dixie Valley)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western States Geothermal</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Desert Peak)</td>
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<td>(Steamboat)</td>
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<td>(Steamboat Hills)</td>
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<td>Nevada Operations, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Empire, Soda Lake, Stillwater)</td>
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<td>Predictive capabilities of model</td>
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REFERENCES

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Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, MS 178
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, Nevada 89557-0088
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<tr>
<td>Bradys (Dual Flash)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desert Peak (Dual Flash)</td>
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<td>Dixie Valley (Dual Flash)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empire (Binary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before Heat Exchanger</td>
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<td>Stillwater (Binary)</td>
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Figure 1. Producing geothermal fields selected for study.

[Map showing locations such as Dixie Valley, Brady’s, Desert Peak, Soda Lake, Stillwater, and others]