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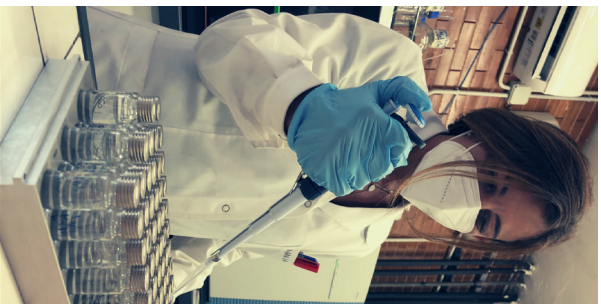
COMMISSIONE UNICOICLO PER LA REALIZZAZIONE  
DEGLI INTERVENTI NECESSARI ALL'ORGANAMENTO  
DELE ATTIVITÀ PRESENTI NEI TERRITORI NAZIONALI

# L'INNOVAZIONE NEL COMPARTO DELLE BONIFICHE E LE TRAIETTORIE DI SVILUPPO

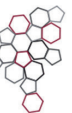
## LIBRO DEGLI ABSTRACT

A CURA DI VITO FELICE URICCHIO, SILVIA PAPARELLA  
E MARCO FALCONI

*con le prefazioni delle Sottosegretarie al MITE On. Ilaria Fontana,  
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MINISTERO DELL'AMBIENTE  
E DELLA TUTELA DEL TERRITORIO E DEL MARE



Sistema Nazionale  
per la Qualità  
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**L'INNOVAZIONE NEL COMPARTO DELLE  
BONIFICHE E LE TRAIETTORIE DI SVILUPPO**

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# Indice

<b>PREFAZIONI .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PREMESSA.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I. CARATTERIZZAZIONE DI SITI INQUINATI .....</b>	<b>26</b>
CARATTERIZZAZIONE DEI MICROBIOMI E METAGENOMICA PER IL BIORISANAMENTO DI SITI CONTAMINATI DA COMPOSTI CLORURATI: CASI DI STUDIO IN SISTEMI BIOELETTROCHIMICI .....	28
L'ESPERIENZA DEL SNPA NEL SIN DI PORTO TORRES: STATO DELL'ARTE, CRITICITÀ E PROSPETTIVE.....	30
LA DISCARICA DI CONTRADA MARTUCCI IN AGRO DI CONVERSANO (BA). IL SUPPORTO TECNICO-SCIENTIFICO DI ARPA PUGLIA PER IL MONITORAGGIO E LA CARATTERIZZAZIONE DEL SITO.....	31
APPLICAZIONE PER ANALISI E VALUTAZIONI TERRITORIALI BASATA SU GEODATABASE OPEN-SOURCE PER LA COMPrensIONE E IL CONTRASTO AL FENOMENO DEGLI ABBANDONI NEL TERRITORIO DI BRINDISI.....	33
USO DELLA SPETTROSCOPIA VIS-NIR PER LA CARATTERIZZAZIONE DI AREE AGRICOLE POTENZIALMENTE CONTAMINATE.....	35
LA CROMATOGRAFIA LIQUIDA-SPETTROMETRIA DI MASSA E MASSA TANDEM COME STRUMENTO PER L'ANALISI DEI PESTICIDI A LIVELLI DI TRACCE (SUB MG/L) IN CORPI IDRICI SUPERFICIALI E SOTTERRANEI DELLA REGIONE PUGLIA.....	37
TUTELA DELLE RISORSE NATURALI E TERRITORIALI ATTRAVERSO L'ANALISI DI IMMAGINI RILEVATE DA PIATTAFORME AEREE PER L'IDENTIFICAZIONE DI CONDOTTE ILLECITE LEGATE ALLE ATTIVITÀ ESTRATTIVE .....	39
MONITORAGGIO DEI SOIL GAS MEDIANTE FLUX CHAMBER APERTA DINAMICA .....	41
LE PIÙ RECENTI METODOLOGIE GEOFISICHE APPLICATE ALLO STUDIO DEI SITI INQUINATI E DELLE DISCARICHE .....	42
LE POTENZIALITÀ DEI MITILI: DA BIOINDICATORI DELLO STATO DI SALUTE DELL'AMBIENTE A BIOMATERIALI NEI PROCESSI DI RIQUALIFICAZIONE AMBIENTALE.....	44
LA VALUTAZIONE DELLA SOSTENIBILITÀ LUNGO IL CICLO DI VITA NELLA GESTIONE DEI RIFIUTI A SEGUITO DELLA RECENTE APPROVAZIONE DEL 'PROGRAMMA NAZIONALE PER LA GESTIONE DEI RIFIUTI' .....	47
DETERMINAZIONE DEL VALORE DI FONDO NATURALE NEI SUOLI PER L'ARSENICO. IL CASO STUDIO DEL COMUNE DI LIVIGNO.....	51
ACQUE AD USO UMANO E CONTAMINANTI UBIQUITARI: PFAS E BISFENOLO A, DAL TESTO DELLA NUOVA DIRETTIVA AI TEST DI LABORATORIO .....	54
MODELLAZIONE IDROGEOLOGICA – CASE STUDY ACCIAIERIE D'ITALIA.....	56
IL MONITORAGGIO DEGLI AMBIENTI ACQUATICI CON OPENSWARE – IL PRIMO ASV MADE IN ITALY .....	58

TETI - TECNOLOGIE INNOVATIVE PER IL CONTROLLO, IL MONITORAGGIO E LA SICUREZZA IN MARE.....	60
MONITORAGGIO DEI VALORI DI RADON NELLE MATRICI AMBIENTALI: UN NUOVO STRUMENTO PER LA MAPPATURA DEI PLUME DI CONTAMINAZIONE DA IDROCARBURI ...	62
NORBIT REAL-TIME DREDGING MONITORING .....	64
CARATTERIZZAZIONE DEL CARBONIO IN SUOLI DI AZIENDE SELVICOLTURALI MONTANE IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA.....	66
UNA PIATTAFORMA DIGITALE PER CONOSCERE LA DISMISSIONE DELL'AMIANTO NELLE NAVI.....	70
MONITORAGGIO DEI VALORI DI RADON NELLE MATRICI AMBIENTALI: UN NUOVO STRUMENTO PER LA MAPPATURA DEI PLUME DI CONTAMINAZIONE DA IDROCARBURI ...	72
<b>II. TECNOLOGIE DI BONIFICA DEI SITI CONTAMINATI .....</b>	<b>74</b>
NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS E RECUPERO DI UN SUOLO MULTI-CONTAMINATO BASATO SULLE INTERAZIONI SINERGICHE TRA MICROORGANISMI NATURALI E BRASSICA NAPUS .	75
BIO-FITO BONIFICA IN UN CONTESTO DENSAMENTE URBANIZZATO: UN ESEMPIO DI INTEGRAZIONE MULTIFUNZIONALE.....	77
ATTENUAZIONE NATURALE POTENZIATA PER IL BIORISANAMENTO DI FALDE CONTAMINATE DA CROMO ESAVALENTE.....	79
DISARMO FERROVIARIO E GESTIONE DEL PIETRISCO CONTENENTE AMIANTO. IL CASO DELLO SCALO GRECO-BREDA, MILANO.....	81
VALORIZZAZIONE DI BIOMASSE VEGETALI PER LA SOSTENIBILITÀ AGRONOMICA: IL RUOLO DEL BIOCHAR NELLA COLTIVAZIONE E NELLA RIDUZIONE DEGLI INQUINANTI AZOTATI DI ORIGINE AGRICOLA .....	82
BONIFICA E MESSA IN SICUREZZA DI SITI CONTAMINATI IN LIGURIA: ANALISI DELLO STATO ATTUALE ALLA LUCE DEL RECENTE AGGIORNAMENTO DEL PIANO REGIONALE.....	84
BONIFICA IN SITU DELLE ACQUE DI FALDA A SEGUITO DI SVERSAMENTO DI GASOLIO E BENZINA.....	86
APPLICAZIONE AD AMPIA SCALA DI UNA TECNOLOGIA RIDUTTIVA PER IL BIORISANAMENTO DI UN ACQUIFERO STORICAMENTE CONTAMINATO DA ALCHENI CLORURATI E METALLI PESANTI IN LOMBARDIA.....	88
DISPOSITIVI E-HYREC®/E-LOREC® PER IL RECUPERO SELETTIVO DI LNAPL E DNAPL....	90
LA REMOTIZZAZIONE, DIGITALIZZAZIONE ED AUTOMAZIONE - L'ESPERIENZA ENI REWIND .....	92
PROVE SPERIMENTALI PER IL TRATTAMENTO IN SITU DI SUOLI MEDIANTE TECNOLOGIA DI STABILIZZAZIONE E SOLIDIFICAZIONE.....	93
PROGETTO NURAGHE: .....	95
UN ESEMPIO DI BONIFICA SOSTENIBILE A KM 0 .....	95
NUOVI APPROCCI PER LA BONIFICA DEI PUNTI VENDITA CARBURANTE – CASI DI STUDIO	96
TRATTAMENTO CROMO ESAVALENTE IN ACQUIFERO ALTAMENTE AEROBICO MEDIANTE ISCR ED ELETTRODONATORI.....	100
VALUTAZIONE DELLA VARIABILITÀ ORARIA DELLE CARATTERISTICHE CHIMICO-FISICHE DEL SOIL GAS IN UN CAMPO PROVA UBICATO ALL'INTERNO DEL SIN DI VENEZIA.....	102

DECLORAZIONE RIDUTTIVA DEI SOLVENTI CLORURATI: COME RICONOSCERE ED EVITARE LO STALLO DEI PROCESSI .....	106
TECNOLOGIE DI BONIFICA: SCELTE E CASI APPLICATIVI .....	109
TRATTAMENTO DI TERRENI CONTAMINATI CON PFAS MEDIANTE GEOCOMPOSITI ATTIVI .....	112
ANALISI DI RISCHIO ECOLOGICA IN AMBIENTE COSTIERO .....	114
INTERVENTO DI BONIFICA MEDIANTE DESORBIMENTO TERMICO IN SITU CON RISCALDAMENTO CONDUTTIVO NEL SIN BUSSI SUL TIRINO .....	116
OTTIMIZZAZIONE DELLA RISORSA IDRICA IN UN PROGETTO DI OPERATIVO DI BONIFICA NELL'AMBITO DELLA RIQUALIFICAZIONE AMBIENTALE DI UNA EX DISCARICA DI RSU ...	118
MAPPATURA DEL LNAPL NEL SOTTOSUOLO E VALUTAZIONE DELLE INTERFERENZE TRA TECNOLOGIE PER LA SUA RIMOZIONE.....	120
SVILUPPI ISCO PER IL CONTROLLO DEL REBOUND .....	123
EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES FOR THE REMEDIATION OF CONTAMINATED SITES. OVERCOME PREJUDICES AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES OF BIOREMEDIATION .....	125
PROVECT-EBR® - GENERATORE IN SITU DI OSSIDANTI REATTIVI - LA NUOVA FRONTIERA .....	128
<b>III. INTELLIGENCE E LEGISLAZIONE AMBIENTALE .....</b>	<b>130</b>
LO SVILUPPO ECOLOGICO IN ATTUAZIONE DEL PRINCIPIO «CHI INQUINA PAGA» NELL'UNITARIO SISTEMA ITALO-EUROPEO DI RESPONSABILITÀ AMBIENTALE .....	131
SICUREZZA AMBIENTALE E COMPETITIVITÀ: IL RUOLO DELLA PREVENZIONE E CONTRASTO DELLA CRIMINALITÀ AMBIENTALE NELL'ATTUAZIONE DELLE BONIFICHE, PERNO DELLO SVILUPPO SOSTENIBILE DEI TERRITORI .....	133
CONSIGLIO REGIONALE PUGLIA E SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....	135
L'ORO BLU: STRATEGIE DI INTELLIGENCE E DI PREVENZIONE PER LA GESTIONE DELLE RISORSE IDRICHE ITALIANE .....	137
LE NOVITÀ INTRODOTTE DALLA LEGGE 79 DEL 29/6/2022 CON RIFERIMENTO ALLE SANZIONI PER ILLECITI AMMINISTRATIVI E PENALI IN MATERIA DI TUTELA AMBIENTALE	139
LA TRANSIZIONE ECOLOGICA DELLA FILIERA OLIVICOLO-OLEARIA, TRA ECONOMIA CIRCOLARE E FINANZA SOSTENIBILE .....	141
INNOVARE LA FILIERA OLIVICOLO-OLEARIA IN SENSO SOSTENIBILE E CIRCOLARE NELLA PROSPETTIVA COSTITUZIONALE .....	143
FILIERA OLEARIA E APPROCCIO ONE HEALTH IN UN'OTTICA COSTITUZIONALMENTE ORIENTATA .....	147
LE INNOVAZIONI INTRODOTTE DALLA STRATEGIA NAZIONALE PER L'ECONOMIA CIRCOLARE ED I RISVOLTI NORMATIVI.....	151
ETICA E BENE COMUNE: RISCOPRIRE IL SENSO DI RESPONSABILITÀ.....	153
PREVENZIONE E RIPARAZIONE DEI DANNI ALL'AMBIENTE .....	154
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PROJECT FINANCING: OPPORTUNITIES AND REQUIREMENTS .....	156
H2020 PROMISCES – PFAS E PERSISTENT MOBILE CHEMICALS NEL TRATTAMENTO E GESTIONE CIRCOLARE DI ACQUE E SEDIMENTI. FRAMEWORK EUROPEO E RISULTATI PRELIMINARI DEL CLUSTER ITALIANO .....	159



PMI UN PATRIMONIO SOSTENIBILE NON VALORIZZATO .....	162
STANDARD DI RIFERIMENTO PER L'ECONOMIA CIRCOLARE: STATO DELL'ARTE E PROSPETTIVE.....	163
LE COMUNITÀ CIRCOLARI: NUOVI MODELLI DI PRODUZIONE E CONSUMO SOSTENIBILI	166
BONIFICHE SOSTENIBILI: PROFILI SOCIALI, AMBIENTALI ED ECONOMICI .....	167
<b>VI. REMTECH EUROPE .....</b>	<b>169</b>
INTEGRATED NUTRIENTS MANAGEMENT IS KEY FOR SUSTAINING CROP PRODUCTIVITY AND SOIL HEALTH .....	170
CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS FOR DRAINED WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND SLUDGE STABILIZATION: ROLE OF PLANTS, MICROBIAL FUEL CELL AND EARTHWORM ASSISTANCE .....	171
DISTRIBUTION OF PATHOGENS AND ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE GENES IN THE VADOSE ZONE OF SOIL-AQUIFER TREATMENT (SAT) SYSTEM .....	173
REMOVAL OF METHYL GREEN FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTIONS BY ADSORPTION ON THE SHRIMP CARAPACE AND PHOTODEGRADATION USING UV-C .....	174
ADDRESSING HIGH CONCENTRATION SOLVENT SITES (DNAPL) WITH A COMBINED- REMEDY: EMULSIFIED OIL AND ZVI .....	176
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF REMEDIATION STRATEGY IN AN OIL SPILL IN THE ECUADORIAN AMAZON REGION .....	177
THE PROCESS OF PRODUCTION OF Fe Mn AND Si Mn IN R.Ž "TOPILNICA" JSC SKOPJE	180
IMMOBILIZATION OF SOIL METAL(LOID)S WITH ENGINEERED BIOCHAR: MODELING THE LONG-TERM PERFORMANCES UNDER ACCELERATED AGING .....	181
EFFECTS OF ENDOPHYTIC FUNGI ON PHYTOREMEDIATION ABILITY OF JATROPHA SP. OF HEAVY METAL CONTAMINATED LANDFILL SOIL .....	183
PHYTO-ASSESSMENT OF COPPER, LEAD AND ZINC IN WATER SPINACH AND OKRA .....	185
EVALUATION OF RIVER SEDIMENT TREND AND STATUS FROM THE ASPECT OF PAH CONTENT.....	187
LEACHING POLLUTANTS FROM MUNICIPAL WASTE IN A LYSIMETER EXPERIMENT .....	189
MANAGEMENT OF CONTAMINATED SITES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC .....	191
EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN THE FIELD OF CONTAMINATED SITES IN SLOVAKIA .....	193
ASSESSMENT OF SHEAR-THINNING FLUIDS AND STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCED IN SITU REMOVAL OF HEAVY CHLORINATED COMPOUNDS-DNAPLS IN AN ANISOTROPIC AQUIFER .....	194
PERFORMANCE OF RAW ZEOLITIC TUFF FOR PHARMACEUTICAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT USING CONSTRUCTED WETLAND.....	196
DEMONSTRATION AND EVALUATION OF AN ON-SITE TREATMENT TRAIN FOR PFAS POLLUTED GROUNDWATER: THE LIFE SOURCE PROJECT. ....	198
IMPROVING DEODORIZING EFFICIENCY BY NUTRIENTS MEDIUM OPTIMIZATION OF ODOROUS HYDROGEN SULFIDE BIOLOGICAL TRICKLING TOWER.....	200
REMOVAL OF CHLORINATED PHENOLS FROM WATER USING BIOCHAR.....	202
ENHANCED AFFINITY FOR PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES ON A MODIFIED CLAY .....	204

ADSORPTION PERFORMANCE OF HYDROCHARS FOR CHLORFENVINPHOS REMOVAL FROM WATER .....	206
PHYTOREMEDIATION OF PFAS IN LEACHATE AND EFFECTS OF BIOCHAR.....	208
EXAMINING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE SOIL GAS RADON DEFICIT TECHNIQUE FOR QUANTIFYING RESIDUAL LNAPL CONTAMINATION.....	210
BIOCHAR - FROM ORGANIC WASTE TO RESOURCE FOR TREATMENT OF CONTAMINATED SOIL .....	212
SIMULTANEOUS DEGRADATION OF PAH AND IMMOBILISATION OF ARSENIC IN CONTAMINATED SOIL BY ELECTROKINETICS .....	214
SOIL MICROARTHROPODS FOR MONITORING THE SOIL POLLUTION HAZARD IN AN INDUSTRIAL REGION IN KERALA, INDIA.....	216
A NON ROUTINARY INSPECTION CAMPAIGN IN NON HAZARDOUS WASTE LANDFILLS IN SARDINIA .....	218
DYNAMIC SKIMMING – A NEW AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO SKIMMING LNAPL .....	220
THERMOREACT® - AN INNOVATIVE REMEDIATION PRODUCT FOR IN-SITU NEUTRALIZATION OF HALOGENS, SULPHUR, PHOSPHORUS AND MERCURY DURING THERMAL DESORPTION.....	222
TREATMENT BY THERMAL DESORPTION OF DIOXIN-CONTAMINATED SOILS AND VAPOUR MANAGEMENT THROUGH THERMAL OXIDIZER AT BIEN HOA AIRBASE, VIETNAM .....	224
URBAN SOIL REMEDIATION: IN SITU THERMAL DESORPTION UNDER A BUILDING, IN THE CENTER OF BRUSSELS.....	226
THE USE OF AEROPONICS AS A TOOL IN MITIGATING EUTROPHICATION IN THE NOTWANE FRESHWATER RIVER SYSTEM: A PARTIAL AQUATIC RESTORATION PROJECT .....	228
THE INFLUENCE OF PHYTOREMEDIATION ON HEAVY METALS BIOAVAILABILITY IN SEDIMENT .....	230
PRODUCED WATER TREATMENT: PHYTODEPURATION ASSESSMENT OF THE HALOPHYTES <i>HALOCNEMUM STROBILACEUM</i> AND <i>SUAEDA FRUTICOSA</i> .....	232
PHYTOREMEDIATION POTENTIAL OF CEREALS ON PETROLEUM HYDROCARBONS MIXED SOIL .....	234
DIFFERENT APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT OF HEAVY METALS CONTAMINATED SEDIMENTS IN THE GREAT BACKA CANAL (SERBIA).....	236
ASSESSMENT OF DRINKING WATER TREATMENT PROCESSES IN NANOPLASTICS REMOVAL: PILOT- SCALE AND MODELLING STUDIES .....	238
DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATE OF ASTM INTERNATIONAL STANDARD METHOD FOR TOXICITY TESTS WITH FRESHWATER MUSSELS .....	240
COAL POWER PLANT ASHES: A PROSPECTIVE LOOK AT A SOURCE OF RARE EARTH ELEMENTS .....	242
DEHALOGENATION OF TRICHLOROETHYLENE VAPORS THROUGH HORIZONTAL PERMEABLE REACTIVE BARRIERS BASED ON ZERO-VALENT BIMETALS IN THE UNSATURATED ZONE ..	245
HEAVY METALS IN OVERBANK SEDIMENTS OF THE SERBIAN PART OF THE IBAR RIVER ..	247
<b>MICROBIAL ELECTROCHEMICAL Cr(VI) REDUCTION IN CONTINUOUS FLOW SYSTEM ...</b>	<b>249</b>
ACCELERATING THE EXPLORATION OF THE CONTAMINATED SITES REGISTRY OF THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL .....	251

IN-SITU TREATMENT OF PFAS IN GROUNDWATER AND OTHER TALL TALES .....	253
RIBAS, REACTIVE INFILTRATION BASIN FOR IN-SITU SOIL TREATMENT .....	255
DARK FERMENTATION AND METHANE PRODUCTION, THE MICROBIOLOGY OF A TWO STAGE PROCESS FOR THE OPTIMISATION OF METHANOGENESIS.....	257
HYDROCARBUROCLASTIC FUNGI AND BACTERIA TO IMPROVE BIOAVAILABILITY AND DEGRADABILITY OF PETROLEUM HYDROCARBONS IN A HISTORICALLY CONTAMINATED SOIL .....	258
DEGRADATION OF PFAS BY ELECTROCHEMICAL OXIDATION.....	259
ASSISTED PHYTOEXTRACTION AS A NATURE- BASED SOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE SOIL REMEDICATION .....	261
FLUX MEASUREMENTS TO DESIGN A NATURE BASED BARRIER IN AN URBAN CANAL ...	263
OVERVIEW OF THE CONCAWE LNAPL TOOLBOX, A NEW WEB-BASED DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR MANAGING LNAPL SITES.....	265
ACQUE AD USO UMANO E CONTAMINANTI UBIQUITARI: PFAS E BISFENOLO A, DAL TESTO DELLA NUOVA DIRETTIVA AI TEST DI LABORATORIO .....	267
KUWAIT ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION PROGRAM: BIOREMEDIATION TREATMENT OPTIMIZATION STUDY .....	269
FIREFIGHTING VALIDATION TESTING OF THE LEADING COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE PFAS- FREE FOAMS ESTCP PROJECT WP21-346 .....	271
THE OCCURRENCE, DISTRIBUTION, AND RISKS OF PFAS AT AFFF-IMPACTED SITES IN FINLAND .....	273
COMBINED OXIDATIVE REMEDIES IN A SINGLE APPLICATION TO TREAT PETROLEUM HYDROCARBON CONTAMINATION.....	275
ORGANIC SOIL MITIGATION .....	277
AIR SPARGING TECHNOLOGY STATUS REVIEW – ADVANCED DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS .....	279
LANDFILL REMEDIATION AND REDEVELOPMENT - A STATUS REVIEW OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE AND TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS .....	281
THERMAL DESORPTION OF HEAVY POLLUTED OILY SLUDGE FROM A DEPOSIT IN A REFINERY .....	283
THE FIRST IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMBINED ELECTRIC RESISTIVE HEATING (ERH) AND MULTI PHASE EXTRACTION (MPE) REMEDY AT A FRACTURED BEDROCK SITE IN SCOTLAND, UK .....	285
ENVIRONMENTAL SEQUENCE STRATIGRAPHY (ESS) AS A FRAMEWORK OF A PROCESS- BASED CONCEPTUAL SITE MODEL TO OPTIMIZE GROUNDWATER REMEDIATION.....	287
EVALUATION AND REMEDIATION OF A LARGE COMMINGLED CHLORINATED SOLVENT PLUME IN THE UNITED STATES EASTERN COASTAL PLAIN .....	289
PROVEN LOW-COST PFAS TREATMENT: CONVERTING POLLUTED AQUIFERS INTO PURIFYING FILTERS .....	291
IMPROVING PERMEABLE REACTIVE ZONE PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES THROUGH COMBINING PLUME DIMENSION ANALYSIS WITH PASSIVE FLUX METER STUDIES .....	293
UNCOVERING ELECTROCHEMICAL REMOVAL MECHANISMS IN THE REMEDIATION OF EMERGING ORGANIC CONTAMINANTS FROM A CLAY SOIL .....	295

FOREVER CHEMICALS CAPTURED AND DESTROYED: PFAS SELECTIVE ION EXCHANGE RESIN TREATMENT.....	297
FOREVER CHEMICALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: PHYSICAL RISKS ASSESSMENT FOR PFAS IMPACTED SITES.....	299
ON-SITE STABILIZATION OF PFAS CONTAMINATION IN VOLCANIC ASH SOIL USING REMBIND® – A CASE STUDY IN NEW PLYMOUTH NEW ZEALAND.....	301
URBAN REGENERATION: MANAGING COMPLEX SOCIAL AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES IN CHILE .....	303
SUSTAINABLE REMEDIATION PROJECTS THAT PRIORITISE THE REUSE OF RESOURCES AS WELL AS THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY .....	305
THE STATE OF THE ART TOOLBOX FOR CHLORINATED SOLVENT INVESTIGATIONS: SMART COMBINATION OF ENHANCED MIP, TARGETED SOIL AND GROUNDWATER SAMPLING AND THE 3D CONCEPTUAL SITE MODEL .....	307
AN ACCURATE INJECTION STRATEGY BY COMBINING ENISSA-MIP DATA AND THE SPIN® INJECTION TECHNOLOGY.....	309
PHOTOCHEMICAL DEGRADATION OF CONTAMINANTS OF EMERGING CONCERN IN AQUEOUS MATRIX.....	311
INVENTORY OF LEAKAGES UNDERGROUND INDUSTRIAL PIPELINES.....	313
CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN DIFFERENT DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES.....	315
HIGH PFAS VALUES IN WATER – A TREATMENT CHALLENGE? .....	317
PFAS IN SOIL – LIMITATION AND SOLUTION IN GERMANY .....	319
SOIL GAS EMERGENCY SAFETY MEASURES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING ACTIVITIES THROUGH MULTIPLE LINES OF EVIDENCE .....	321
MALAMOCCO-MARGHERA NAVIGATION CHANNEL (VENICE LAGOON): STUDY OF OPERATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE NAVIGATION .....	323
REMEDIATION OF CONTAMINATED LAND USING PHYTOREMEDIATION TECHNIQUES..	325
COMBINING HIGH-RESOLUTION CHARACTERIZATION AND MONITORING WITH STATISTICAL METHODS: A PROPOSAL TO OVERCOME THE LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL METHODS	327
MERCURY IN EUROPEAN RIVER BED SEDIMENTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE.....	329
THERMAL TREATMENT OF PFAS IMPACTED SOIL – FIELD DEMONSTRATION AND SCALE-UP CONSIDERATIONS.....	331
IMPROVING SITE MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY AND REMEDIATION EFFECTIVENESS BY UTILIZING MORE ROBUST CONCEPTUAL SITE MODELS .....	333
VALUTAZIONE DELLA VARIABILITÀ ORARIA DELLE CARATTERISTICHE CHIMICO-FISICHE DEL SOIL GAS IN UN CAMPO PROVA UBICATO ALL'INTERNO DEL SIN DI VENEZIA.....	335
ADVANCED VAPOR INTRUSION MITIGATION METHODOLOGIES FOR COMPLEX SUBSURFACE CONDITIONS.....	337
PILE FOUNDATION OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OVER LANDFILL SITES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.....	339
IN-SITU THERMAL REMEDIATION OF DNAPL UNDER A FORMER MANUFACTURING FACILITY.....	341
FUNCTIONALIZATION OF CARBON-BASED MATERIALS FOR CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS (CRMs) REMOVAL FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTION .....	343

OUTDOOR CULTIVATION OF AN AUTOCHTHONOUS MICROALGAL STRAIN IN PILOT-SCALE:  
 PROTOTYPE FOR URBAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT .....345

POT TEST STUDY TO DETERMINE THE BEST PHYTOREMEDIATION TREATMENT FOR TPH  
 CONTAMINATED SOILS USING PLANT SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL FOR BIOFUEL PRODUCTION  
 .....347

USING HIGH-RESOLUTION TOOLS AND 3-D VISUALIZATION AND ANIMATION (3-DVA)  
 TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS.....349

ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF  
 SATURATED AND UNSATURATED SOIL REMEDIATION TECHNOLOGIES WITH AECOM  
 SUSTAINABLE REMEDIATION TOOL .....351

SURE BY RAMBOLL: A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT IN REMEDIATION. CASE  
 EXAMPLE FOR GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION .....353

SURFACTANT ENHANCED EXTRACTION OF NAPL, GLOBULE, AND SORBED PHASE  
 CONTAMINATION RESOLVING HYDRO-GEO-CHEMICAL LIMITATION TO CONTAMINANT  
 AVAILABILITY .....355

ADSORPTION PERFORMANCE OF HYDROCHARS FOR CHLORFENVINPHOS  
 REMOVAL FROM WATER .....357

TECHNOLOGY OF OIL POLLUTION CONTROL AND ELIMINATION BY USING METHOD OF  
 BIOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION OF HYDROCARBON COMPOUNDS .....359

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A CLEAN TECHNOLOGY FOR THE INTEGRAL  
 TREATMENT OF METALLURGICAL EFFLUENTS AND TAILINGS NEUTRALIZATION BASED ON  
 THE USE OF CALCAREOUS AGENTS.....361

CRITERA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE.....363

QUANTARRAY®-NSZD: A NEW TOOL FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF NATURAL SOURCE ZONE  
 DEPLETION.....365

DECISIONAL KEY ELEMENTS FOR A PROFITABLE URBAN MINING PROJECT ON PAST  
 METTALLURGICAL SITES AND DEPOSITES – THE NWE -REGENERATIS PROJECT .....367

MASS DISCHARGE CALCULATION FOR REHABILITATION OF INDUSTRIAL SITE .....369

REMEDIAL SAFETY IN IN-SITU CHEMICAL OXIDATION, CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS.....371

SUSTAINABLE RESILIENT REMEDIATION .....373

INCORPORATING RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION INTO THE SURF-UK SUSTAINABLE  
 REMEDIATION FRAMEWORK .....375

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROTOCOL OF THE CAPO FRASCA MILITARY TRAINING  
 SITE, WEST SARDINIA .....377

TRANSPARENT TAILINGS INITIATIVE: MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR  
 TAILINGS FACILITIES.....379

AEROBIC COMETABOLISM FOR TREATMENT OF TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING  
 GROUNDWATER CONTAMINANTS .....381

STABILIZATION OF PFAS CONTAMINATED SOIL TO MINIMIZE COST FOR CONSTRUCTION  
 WORKS AND CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR WIDELY CONTAMINATE AND ACTIVE AREAS ....382

SURFACE ACTIVE FOAM FRACTIONATION (SAFF) IN COMBINATION WITH  
 ELECTROCHEMICAL OXIDATION: EFFECTIVE PFAS REMOVAL FROM WATER USING ONLY  
 AIR, CREATING ZERO WASTE .....384

EVALUATION OF THE PFAST METHOD – PERFLUORINATED ASSISTED SOIL TREATMENT ON DIFFERENT SOILS FROM AN AIRPORT IN SWEDEN, USING SURFACE ACTIVE FOAM FRACTIONATION (SAFF) IN COMBINATION WITH DIFFERENT ADDITIVES TO PERFORM PFAS SOIL WASHING .....	386
SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE FACTS AND EXPERIENCE OF REMEDIATION/REFORESTION OF DAMAGE FOREST IN GEORGIA.....	388
ASSESSMENT OF THE “MINDSET” AND CULTURE FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY WITH THE USE OF IT: A CASE STUDY IN THE ELECTRONIC WASTE INDUSTRY IN BRAZIL .....	390

## Microbial electrochemical Cr(VI) reduction in continuous flow system

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Bioelectrochemical systems (BESs) are emerging technologies combining electrochemistry and biological methods. Consisting of biological reactors and two electrodes connected by an external circuit, they exploit the ability of certain bacteria to exchange electrons with solid substrates. These bacteria are called electroactive bacteria (EB). BESs applied to the remediation of contaminated soil have shown great efficacy to treat various pollutants: heterotrophic bacteria break down organic pollutants, including phenols, PAHs, and PCBs, into simple substrates which are oxidized by EB at the anode. The released electrons circulate to the cathode where other EB transfer them to a terminal electron acceptor (TEA), for example, oxygen or contaminants such as trichloroethylene and hexavalent chromium, that thus get reduced at the cathode. Bioelectrochemical technology is a versatile system that offers an adaptable platform for the removal of both organic pollutants and heavy metals from contaminated soils. The soil is a particularly complex and challenging environmental medium, as many factors, such as soil permeability, electrical conductivity, heterogeneous compositions, limited substrate mass transfer, and soil-contaminant interaction influence the pollutants' bioelectrochemical removal. To overcome these obstacles, different configurations of BESs have been proposed such as the single chamber, dual chamber, U-shape, and column type systems. In this study, a bioelectrochemical continuous flow (BECF) system with saturated Cr(VI)-contaminated soil has been set up to evaluate Cr(VI) reduction performance in comparison to an abiotic electrochemical system (AC) and an open circuit control (OC) to simulate natural attenuation mechanisms in aquifers.

During the first 20 days of operation, the systems were subjected to an initial concentration of 20 mg/l Cr(VI). A reduction in Cr(VI) concentration of more than 80% of the initial value was observed in all the systems. At the end of the test, the concentrations of dissolved chromium in the systems were  $2.66 \pm 0.13$ ,  $0.10 \pm 0.01$ ,  $1.37 \pm 0.07$  mg/L in the AC system, the BECF system, and OCC, corresponding to Cr(VI) reductions of 86.7%, 99.5% 93.2% respectively. The trend in dissolved Cr(VI) concentration is similar in the various systems, but, differently than in both OCC and AC, in the BECF a reduction as high as 99.4% was observed on the ninth day of testing, demonstrating a faster removal rate than the controls. The average chromium removal rates in the 20 days of the test were found to be equal to 0.87, 1.00, and 0.93 mg l<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> respectively in the AC, the BECF, and the OCC.

Another test has been performed by increasing Cr (VI) dissolved concentration up to 50 mg/L, following a no-operation period for the columns of about 28 days. At the end of the test, the concentrations of dissolved chromium in the systems were  $24.92 \pm 1.25$ ,  $0.02 \pm 0.01$ ,  $1.09 \pm 0.05$  mg/L, equal to removals of 26.3%, 99.9% 96.7% in the AC system, the BECF system, and the OCC. In BECF and OCC, despite in the first 70 days, the trends in chromium concentrations were similar with over 90% removal in both systems (93% in BECF and 91% in OCC), at longer times a divergence in the concentration trends was observed. Conversely, in the AC, Cr(VI) concentrations following a fast reduction to 20-25 mg/l remained pretty stable until the end of the experiment.

Bioelectrochemical chromium removal from saturated soil was performed in a continuous flow system. The tests have been benchmarked with controls tests and it was shown that the microbial electrochemical removal of Cr (VI) can occur, even without the addition of organic carbon and nutrients in a continuous system; the electroactive bacterial community development on the electrodes and closest to them allowed the treatment of hexavalent chromium highly contaminated soil and water. Furthermore, the tested lab-scale configuration could be considered for a future scale-up of the technology for in-situ soil remediation.

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