

Automatic Quantification of Dissolved Copper at Remote Mine Drainage Sites

American Society of Reclamation Sciences
Butte, Montana
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Presented by:

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dean@fluidphotonics.com



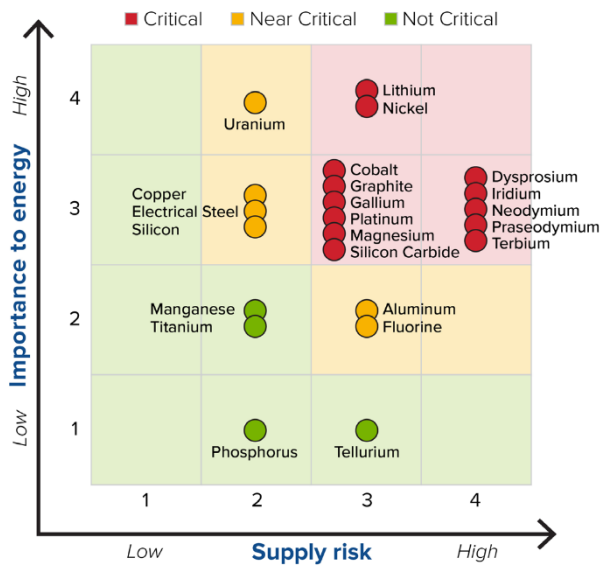
PROBLEM STATEMENT

The demand for refined metals will increase over the next decade.

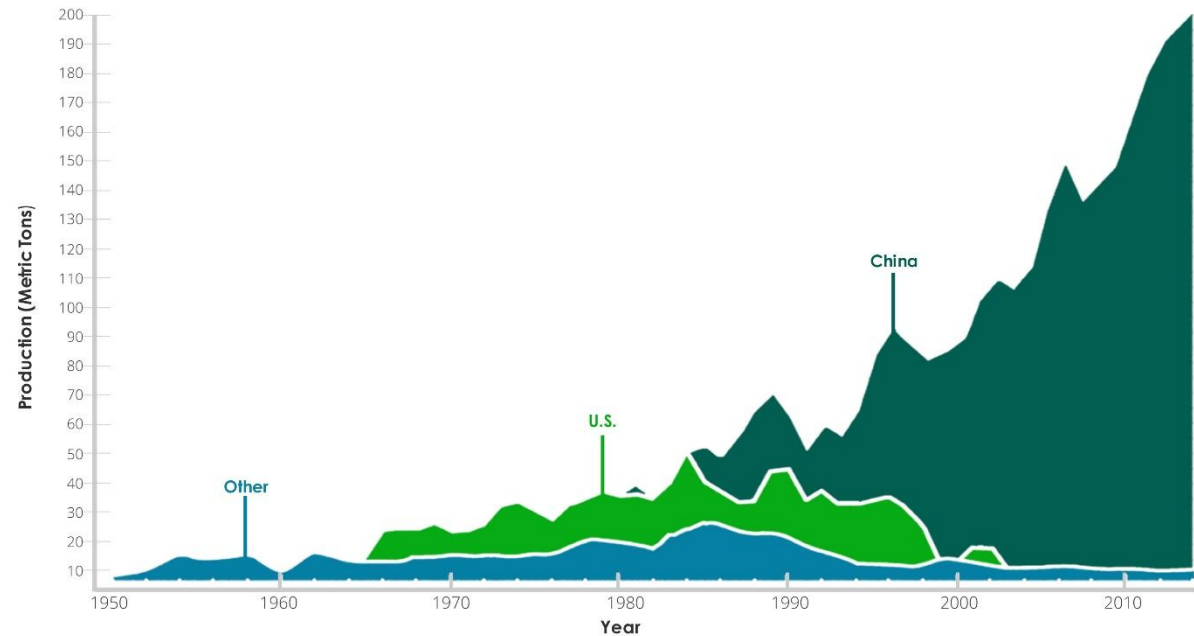
Meanwhile, reliance on imports is at an all-time high.

U.S. Department of Energy
2023 Criticality Assessment

MEDIUM TERM 2025-2035



Rare Earth Element Supply by Country over time



U.S. Department of Energy. (2025, May). *Critical Minerals and Materials*. Retrieved from www.energy.gov/topics/critical-minerals-and-materials

Mullen, J. (2023, February 22). Retrieved from US DOE National Energy Technology Laboratory: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/overview-netl-critical-minerals-materials-program.pdf>

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The United States needs more geologists, mining engineers and chemists.

“Our nation faces another critical shortage that jeopardizes our ability to produce the necessary quantity of these minerals efficiently, safely, and sustainably :

a lack of college graduates sufficiently skilled in the key geological and engineering disciplines (mining, metallurgical, mineral, and geological).”

- Essential Minerals Association



PROBLEM STATEMENT

*What if we could be 100x more effective
or be in 100 places at once?*



What is the Hummingbird™ Platform?

- New sensor technology can detect a wide range of chemicals.
- Measurements are performed in-process to provide actionable data for process control.

How does it work?

- The key sensing element is a fluid-fluid microreactor.
- Photochemicals are circulated through the microreactor, where they interact with crossflow.
- Optical instruments measure the fluorescent response of the photochemicals.
- A wide range of substances can be targeted for measurement using photochemicals.



Dean Gouramanis

Automation Engineer



About Myself

- My day job: I build robots that build aircraft.

What does that mean?

- I solve problems through automation.
- I work with hydraulics.



The toolbox of a Chemical Process Control Engineer.



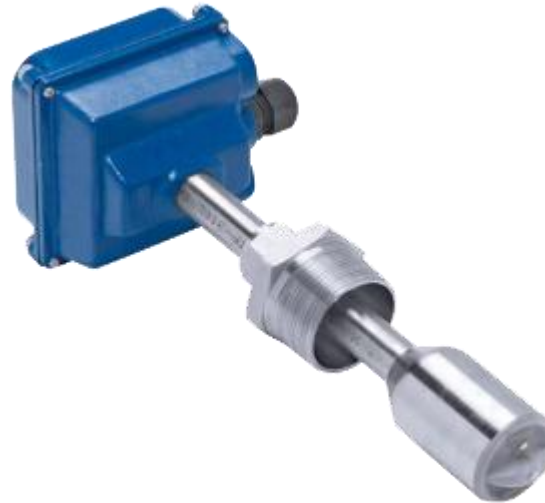
temperature

1885



pressure

1940



flow

1930



pH

1930

Systems are heavily reliant on mathematical models.



Modeling Recipe of Liquid-Liquid Extraction Processes

▪ Distributed Plug Flow Model:

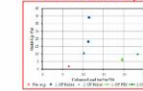
$$\text{Dispersed Phase MB: } \frac{\partial c_{d,i}}{\partial t} = -u_d \times \frac{\partial c_i}{\partial z} + D_{ax,d} \times \frac{\partial^2 c_i}{\partial z^2} + k_{eff} \times \frac{6}{d_{drop}} \times (c_{d,i} - c_{d,eq,i})$$

$$\text{Continuous Phase MB: } \frac{\partial c_{c,i}}{\partial t} = u_c \times \frac{\partial c_i}{\partial z} + D_{ax,c} \times \frac{\partial^2 c_i}{\partial z^2} - k_{eff} \times \frac{6}{(1-\varphi) \times d_{drop}} \times (c_{d,i} - c_{d,eq,i})$$

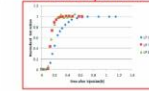
- 3 days to 1 week
- 100 - 200 g Feed material
- 3 Tracer velocities + rep.
- 5 Droplet sizes + rep.
- 5 Concentrations

▪ 1. Fluid Dynamics:

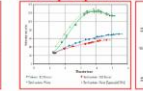
1.1 Column Hold-Up



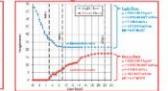
1.2 Tracer Experiments



1.3 Drop Experiments

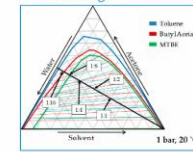


1.4 Settling Behavior

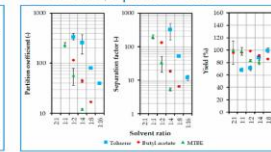


▪ 2. Phase Equilibrium:

2.1 Phase Diagram

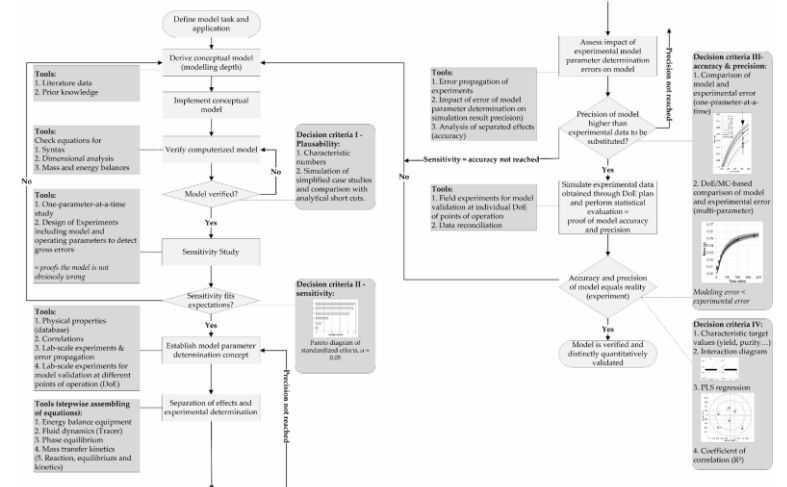
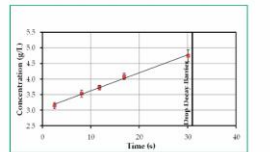


2.2 Distribution/Separation Factors

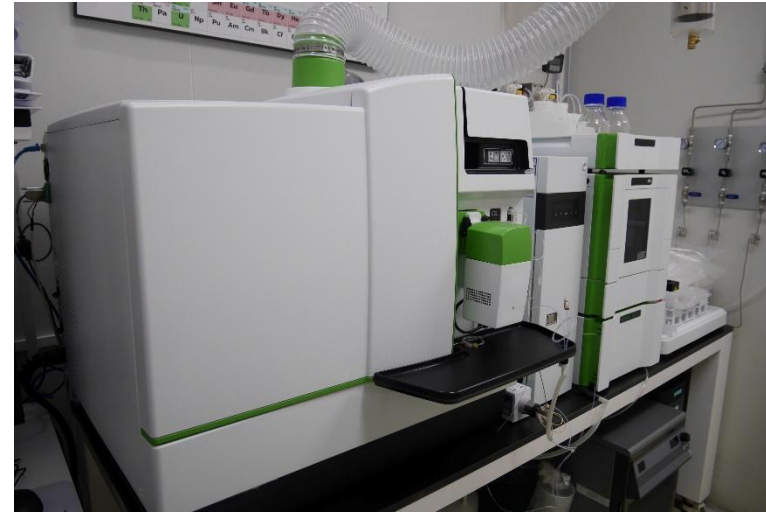


▪ 3. Mass Transfer Kinetics:

3.1 Effective Mass Transfer Coefficient



Chemical composition is measured periodically.



EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov 1984

Method 200.2, R
Sample Preparation
Spectrochemical
Total Recoverable

METHOD 200.7
**DETERMINATION OF METALS AND TRACE ELEMENTS IN WATER AND WASTES
BY INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMA-ATOMIC EMISSION SPECTROMETRY**

Revision
EMMC Ver

ASTM
INTERNATIONAL
Designation: D1976 – 07

**Standard Test Method for
Elements in Water by Inductively-Coupled
Atomic Emission Spectroscopy¹**

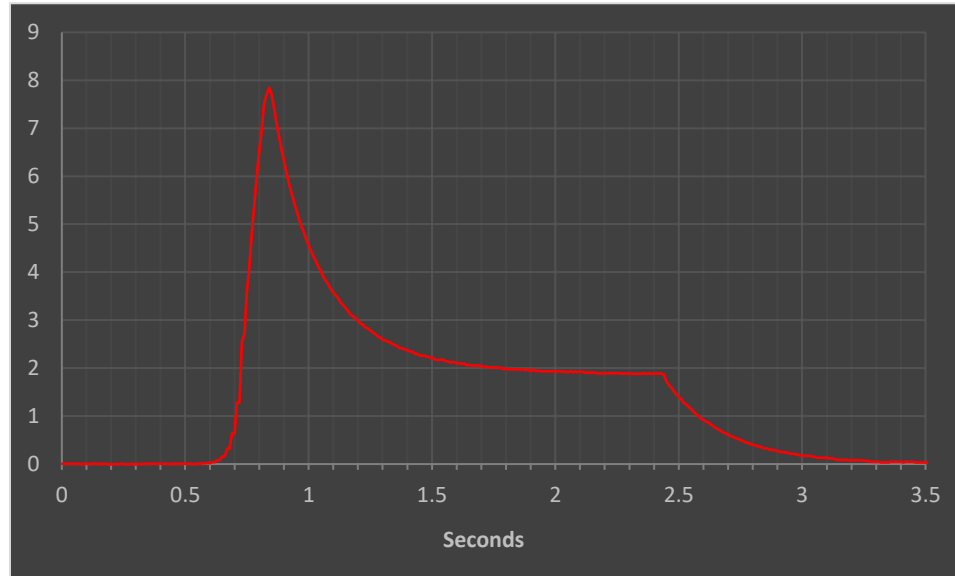
This standard is issued under the fixed designation D1976; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of supersession. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

There are different kinds of precision.



Accuracy

Event Recording



Timing



temperature



pressure



flow



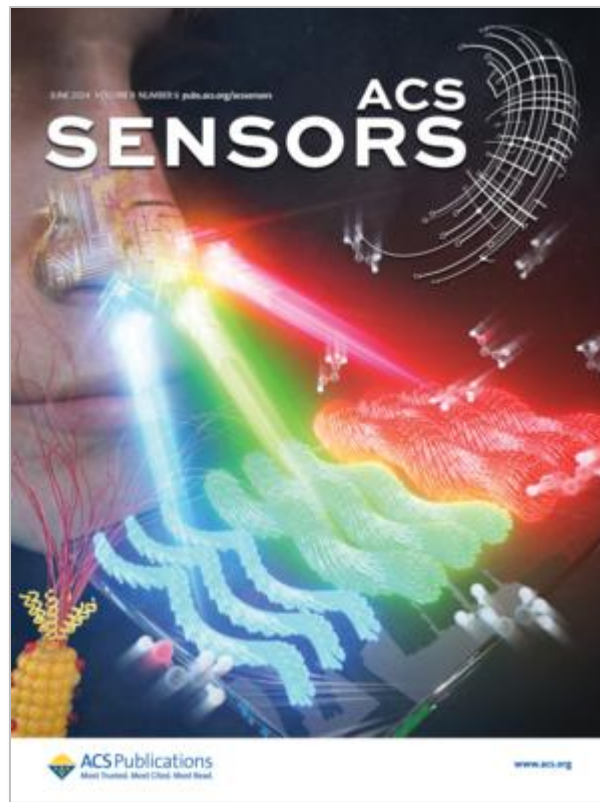
pH

Photochemical Sensors



Chemical Sensors

- Thousands are published.
- Hundreds of new sensors every year.



ACS Sens. 2024, 9, 6, 2869–2876

Types of sensors.

Colorimetric reagents exhibit a change in absorbance.

Examples:

- Copper
- Arsenic
- Molybdenum



Absorbance Signal

Fluorescent reagents exhibit a change in emission.

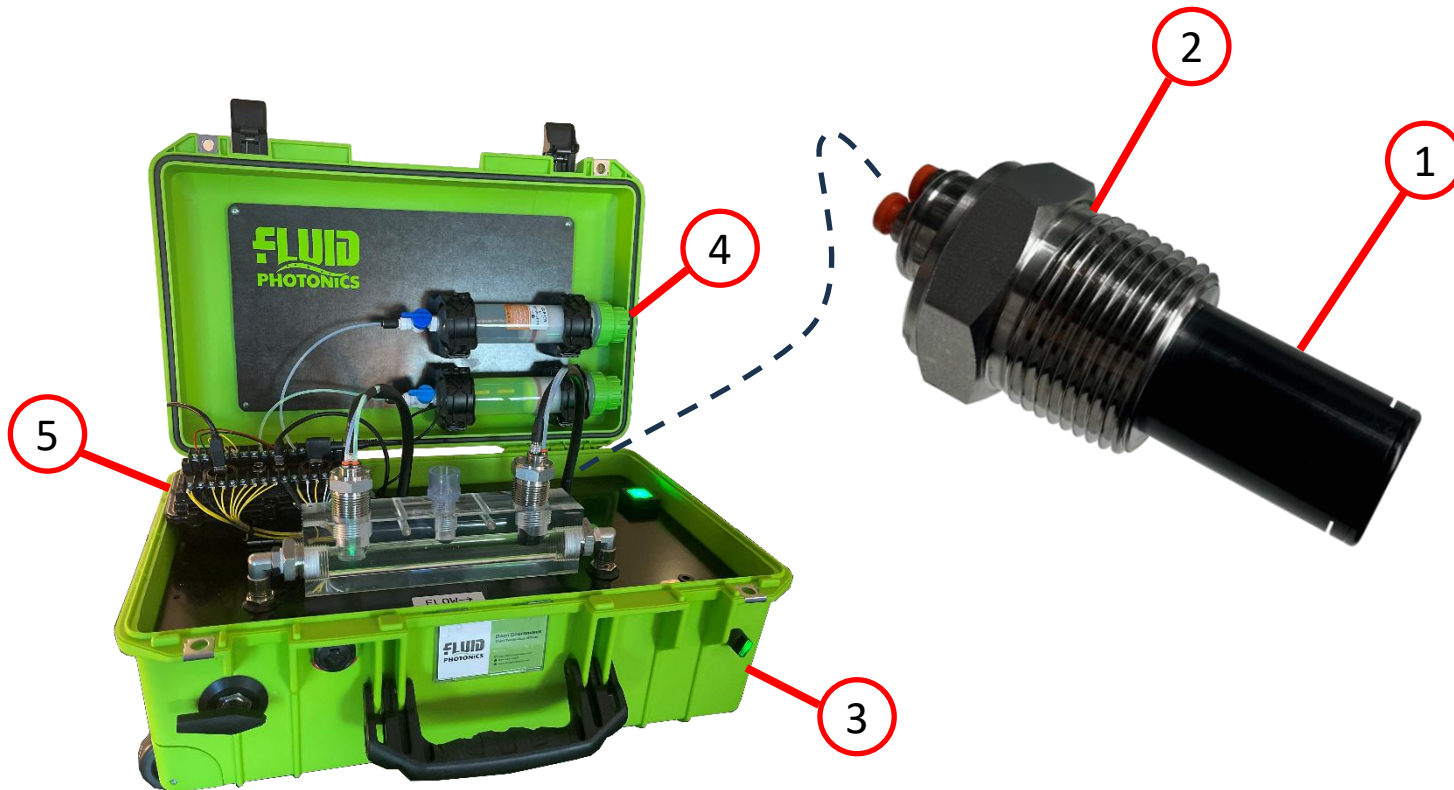
Examples:

- Lithium
- Cobalt
- Neodymium



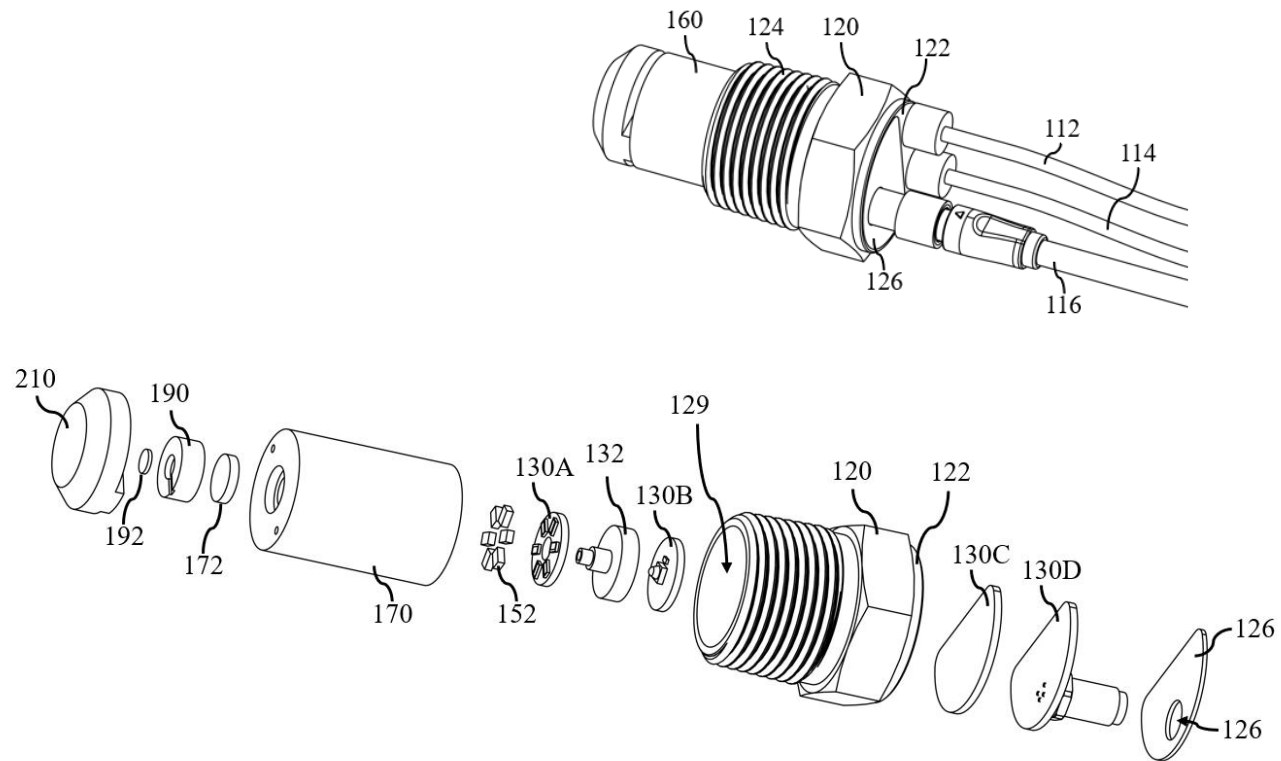
Fluorescent Signal

Not a sensor. A sensing platform.

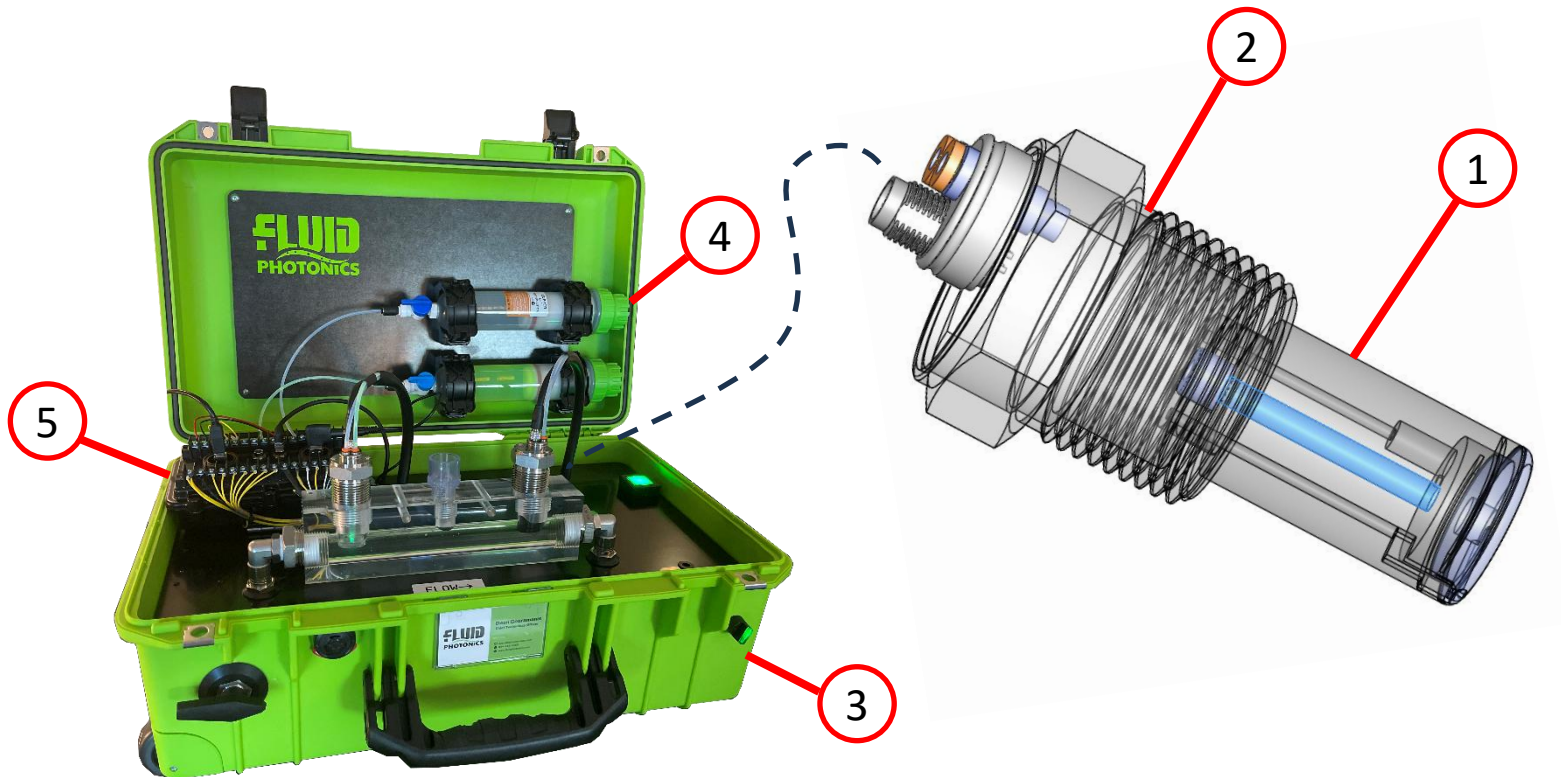


1. Fluid Reactor
2. Optical Instruments
3. Pumps
4. Reagents
5. Computer

How does it work?

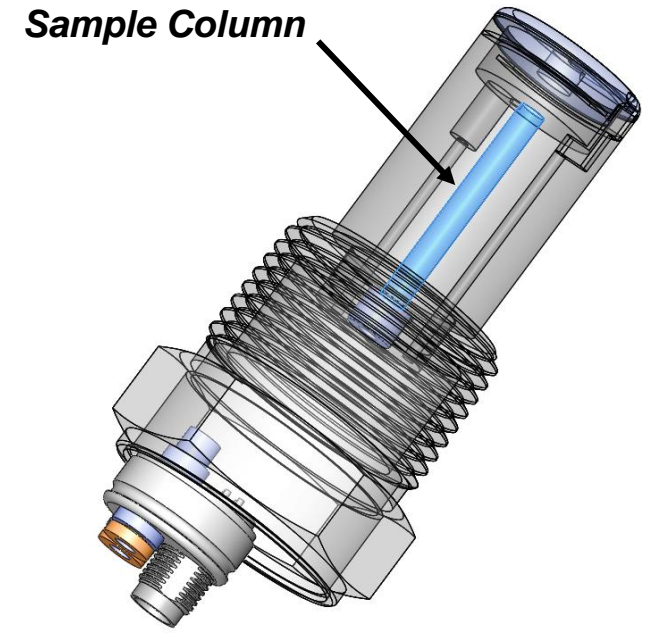
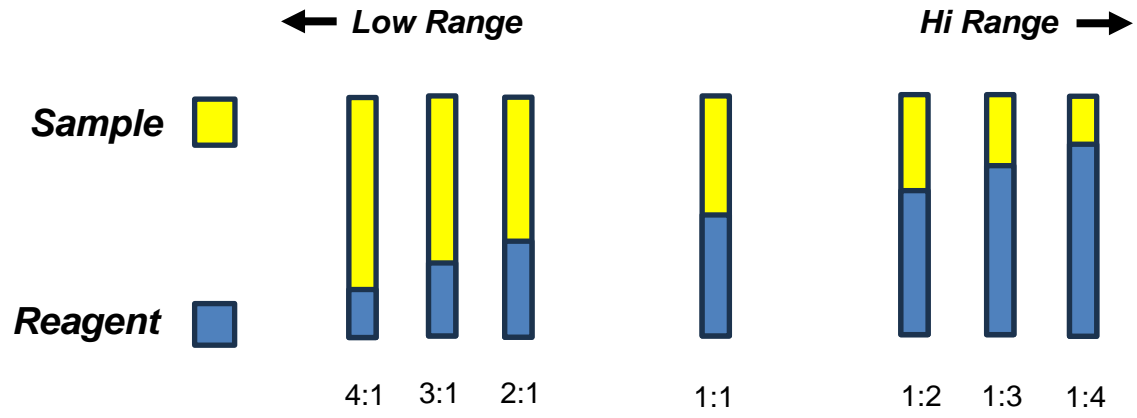


Not a sensor. A sensing platform.

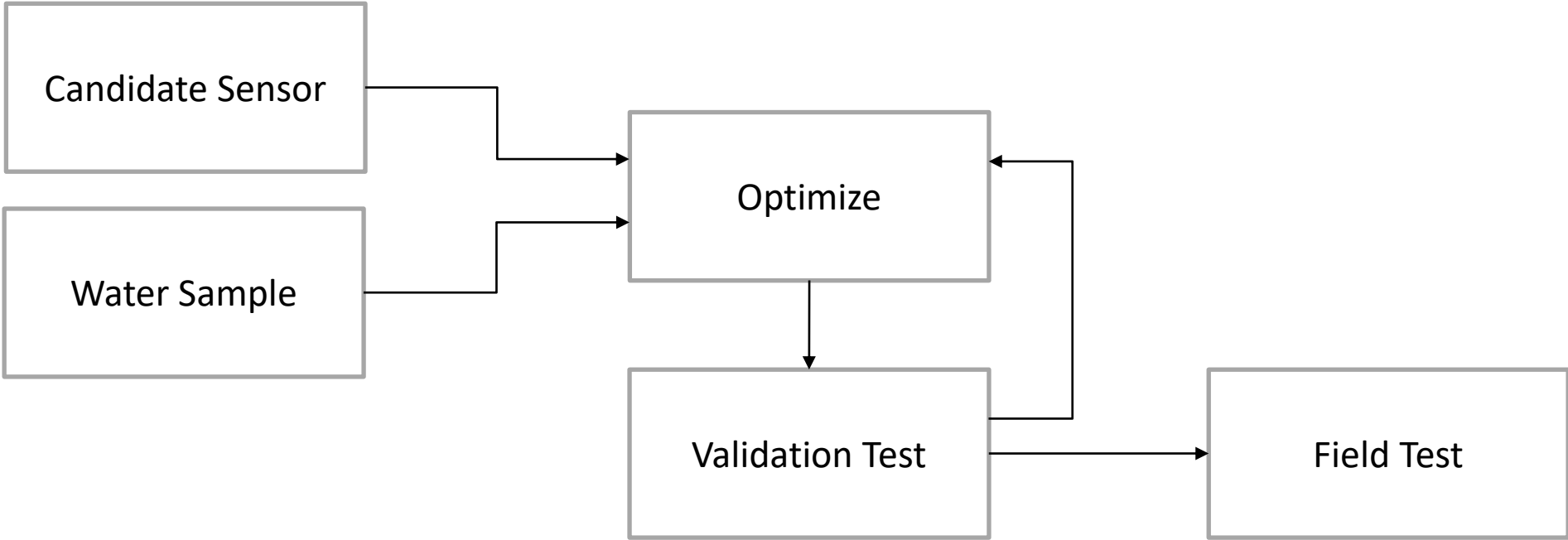


1. Fluid Reactor
2. Optical Instruments
3. Pumps
4. Reagents
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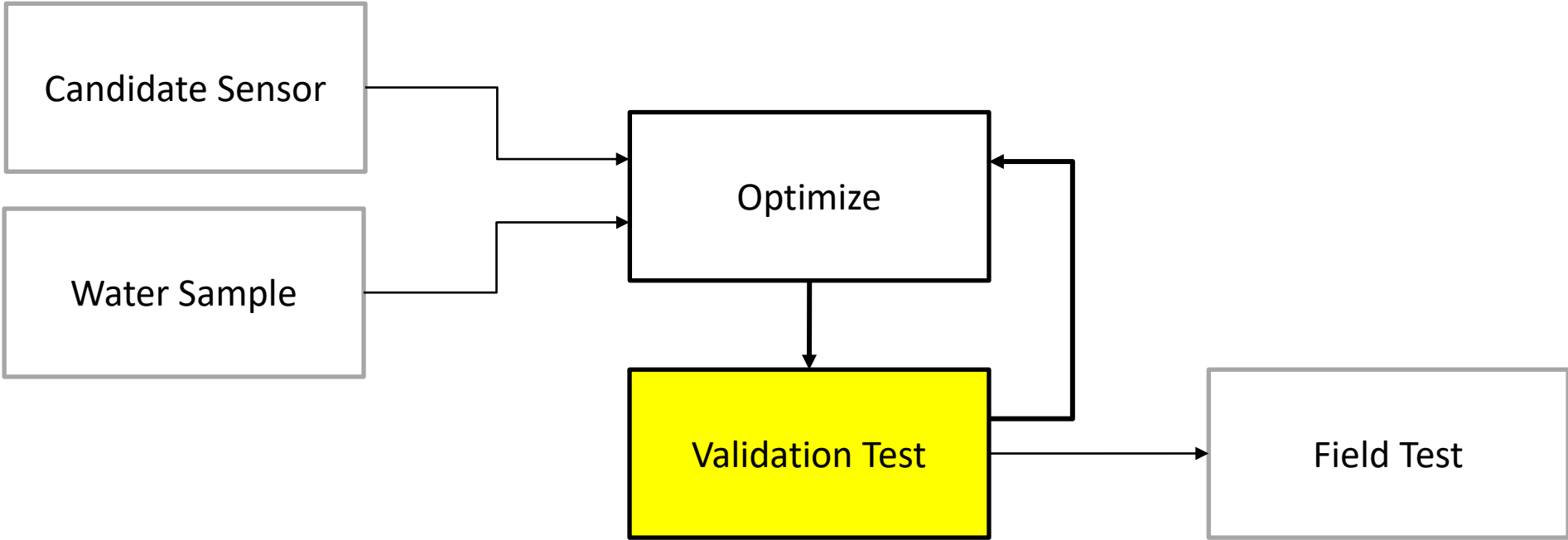
Auto-Ranging



Sensor Creation Process



Sensor Creation Process



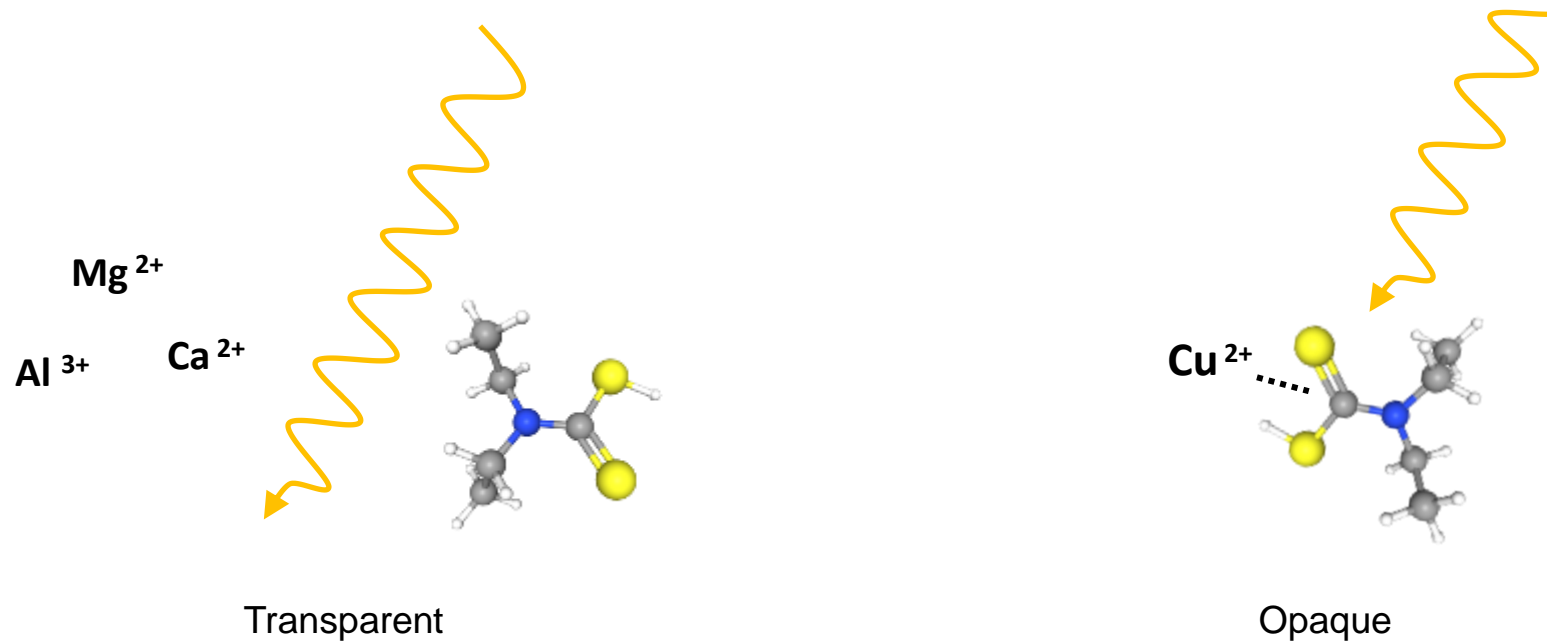
Case Study: Creating a continuous copper monitor using DDTc



- Originally published in 1956.
- Used to measure copper content in food, rubber and industrial products.
- Used everyday to test for copper in saltwater aquariums.

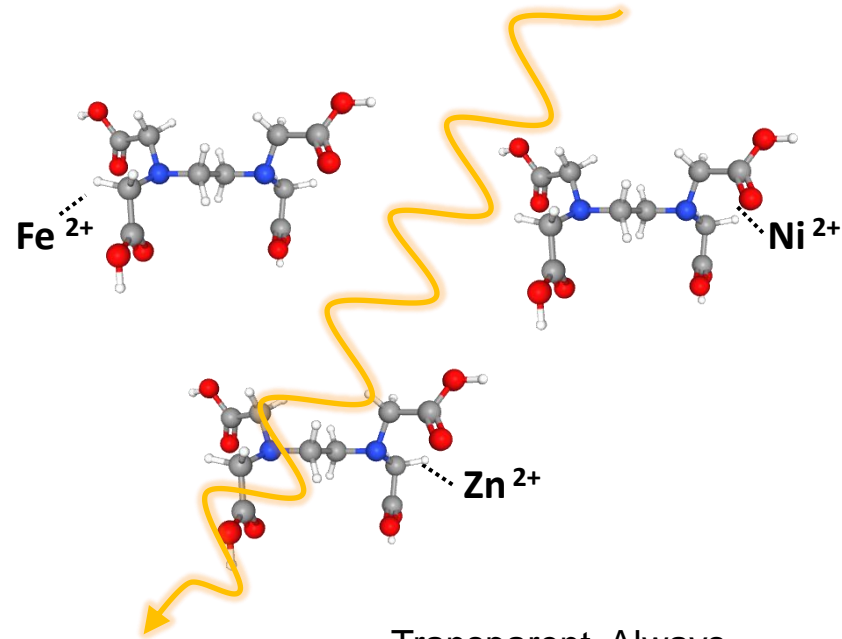
How does it work?

DDTC = diethyldithiocarbamate



How does it work?

EDTA = ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid



Transparent, Always

How does it work?

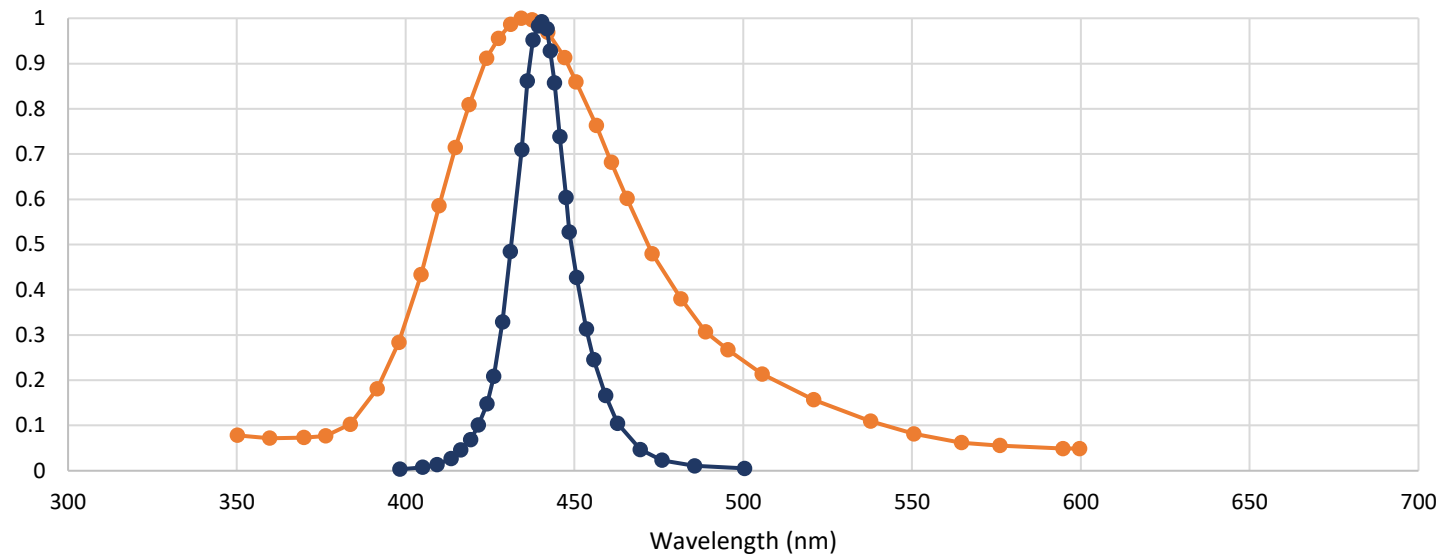


8 ppm

4 ppm

0 ppm

Absorbance vs. Wavelength



Bhuyan, Mohammad. (2014). Copper and Mercury in Food, Biological and Pharmaceutical Samples: Spectrophotometric Estimation as Cu(DDTC)₂. American Journal of Analytical Chemistry. 5. 838-850.

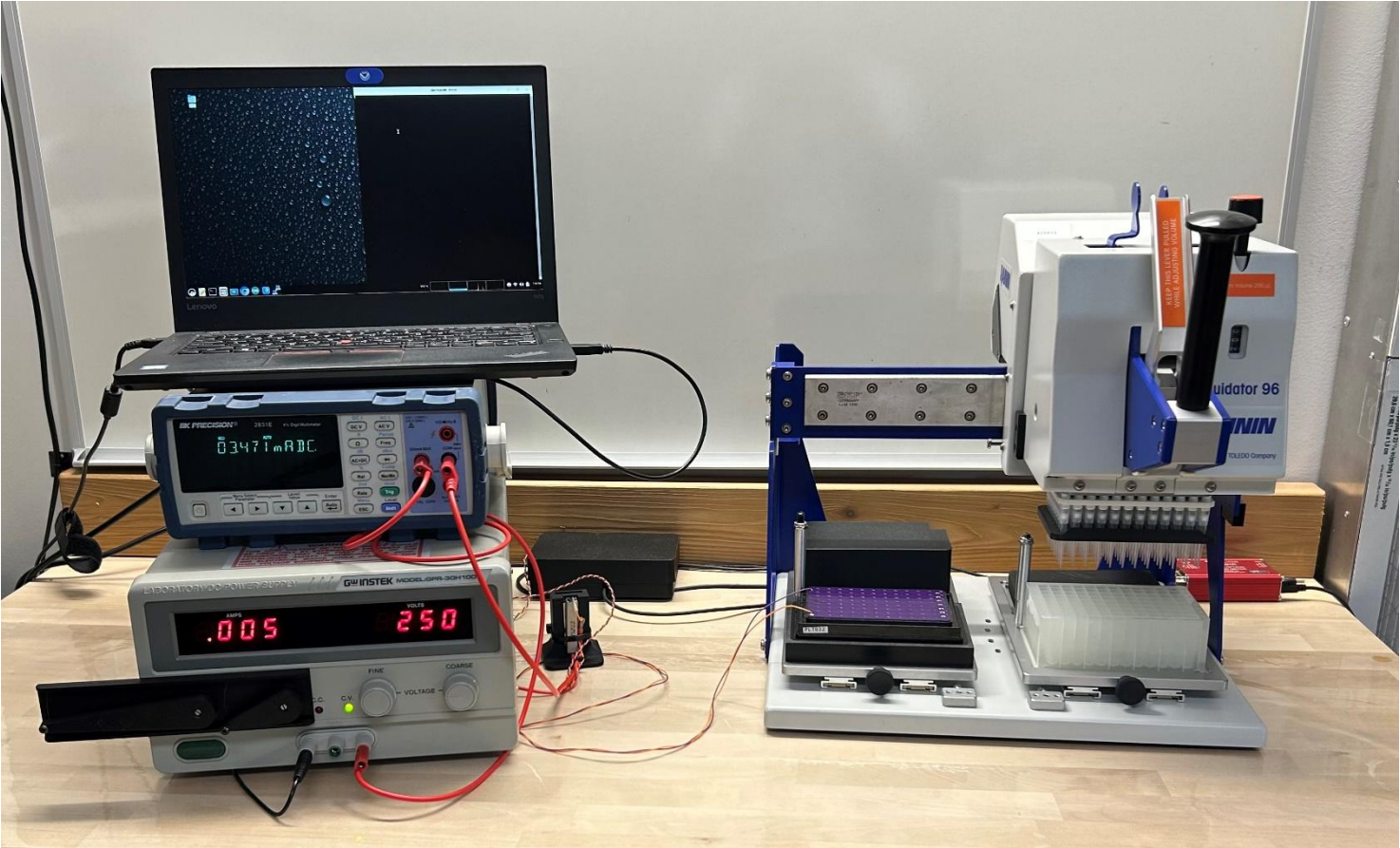
—●— Absorbance Cu-DDTC
—●— Light Source

Sensor Research

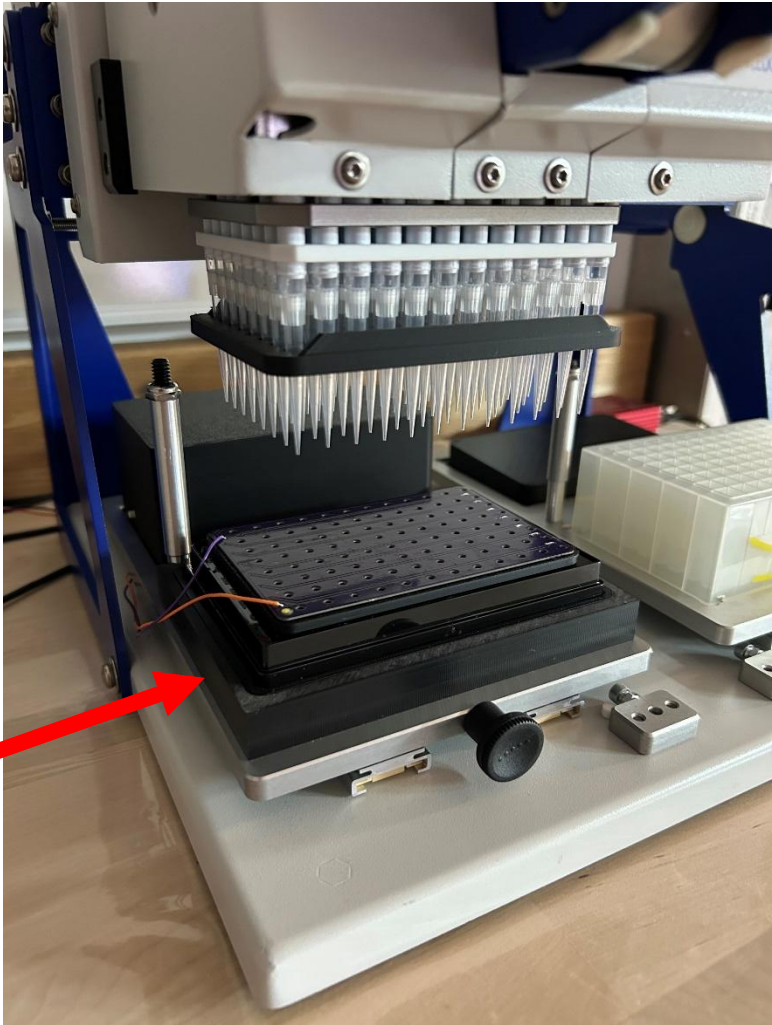
How to we turn reagents into sensors?



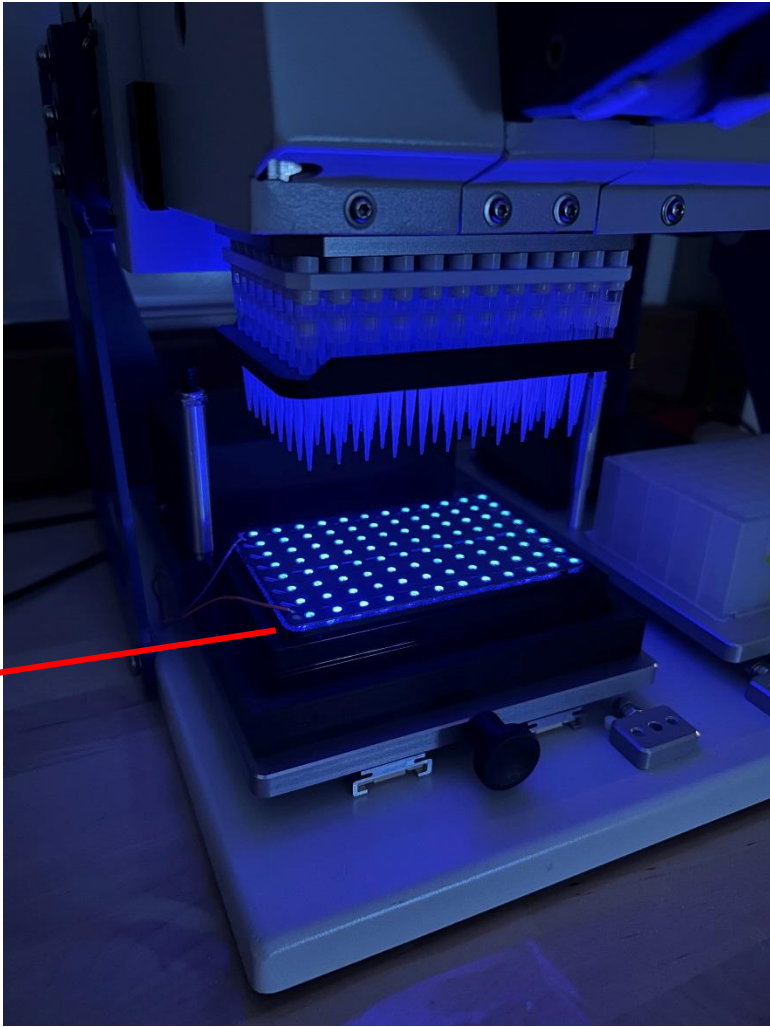
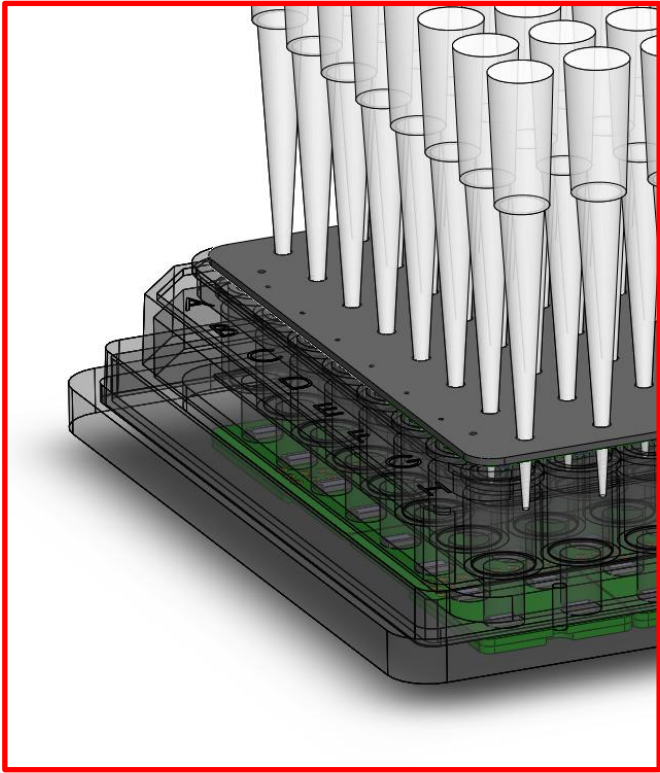
Apparatus



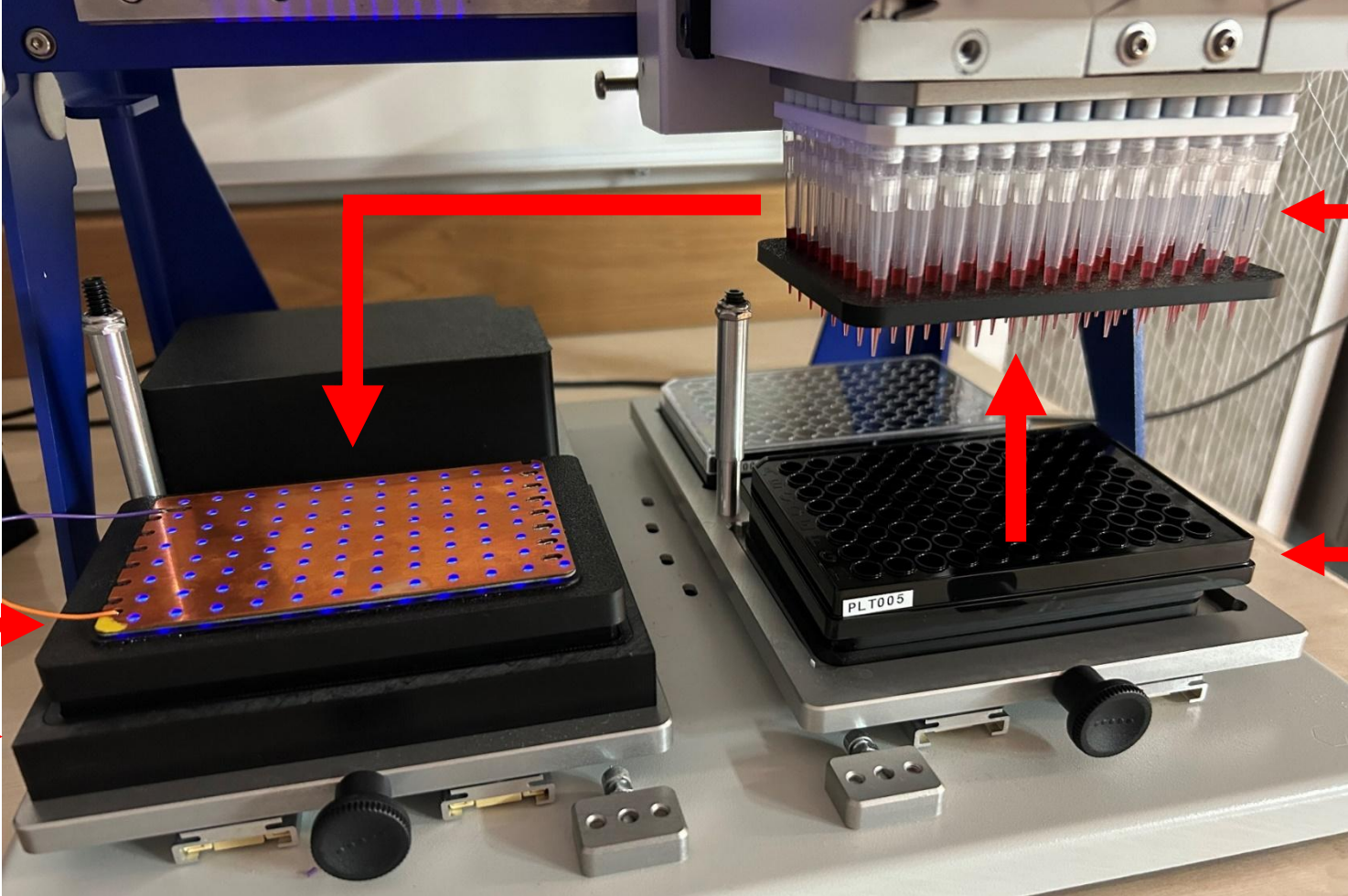
Apparatus



Apparatus



Apparatus



SAMD Plate

Data Recorder

Pipettor 96-ch

Reagent Plate





Dynamic Range

Test Parameters:

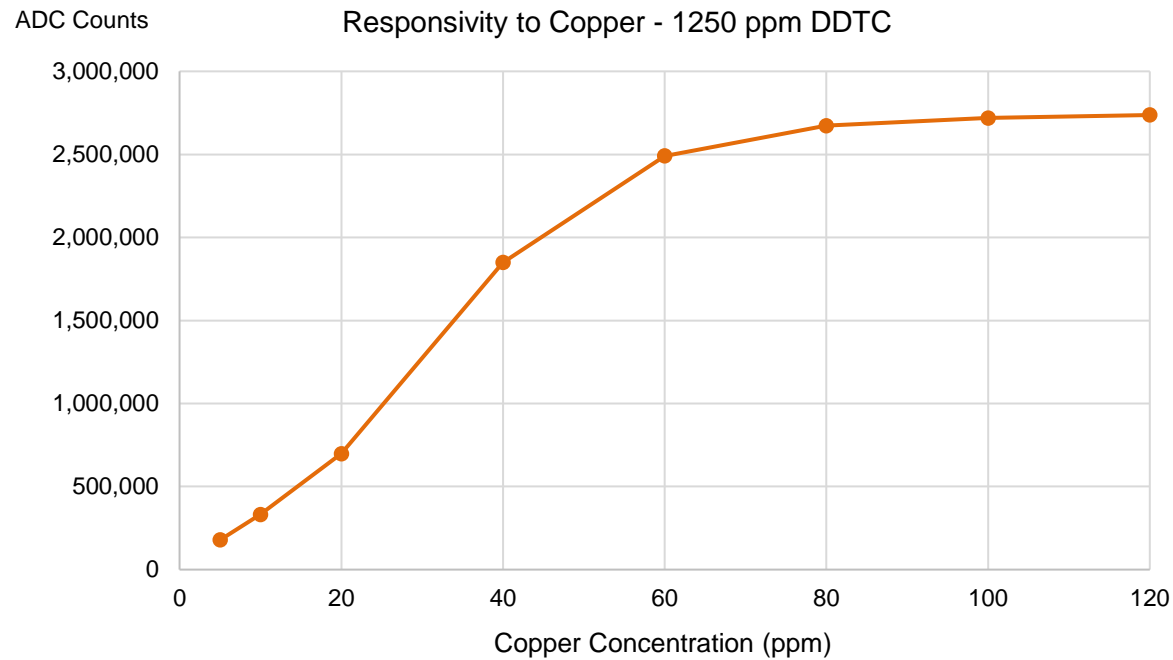
Acidity = 3.0 pH H₂SO₄

Temperature = 22 °C

Excitation Power = 2.6 mW

Wavelength = 435 nm

Dilution Factor = 1:3



Dynamic Range

Test Parameters:

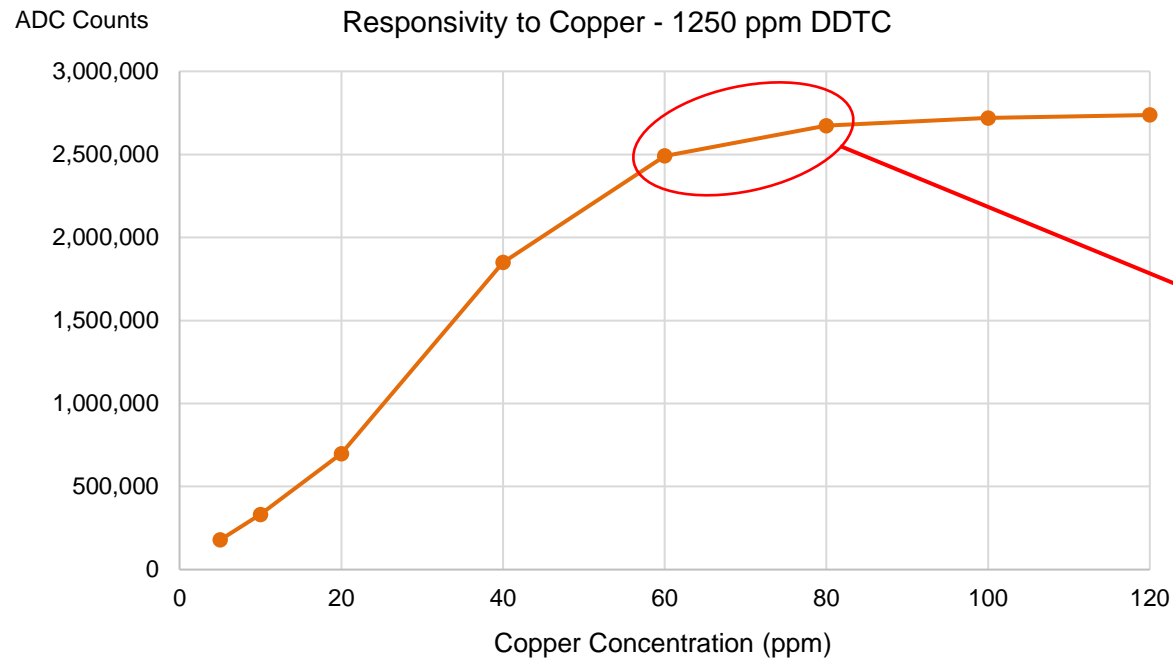
Acidity = 3.0 pH H₂SO₄

Temperature = 22 °C

Excitation Power = 2.6 mW

Wavelength = 435 nm

Dilution Factor = 1:4

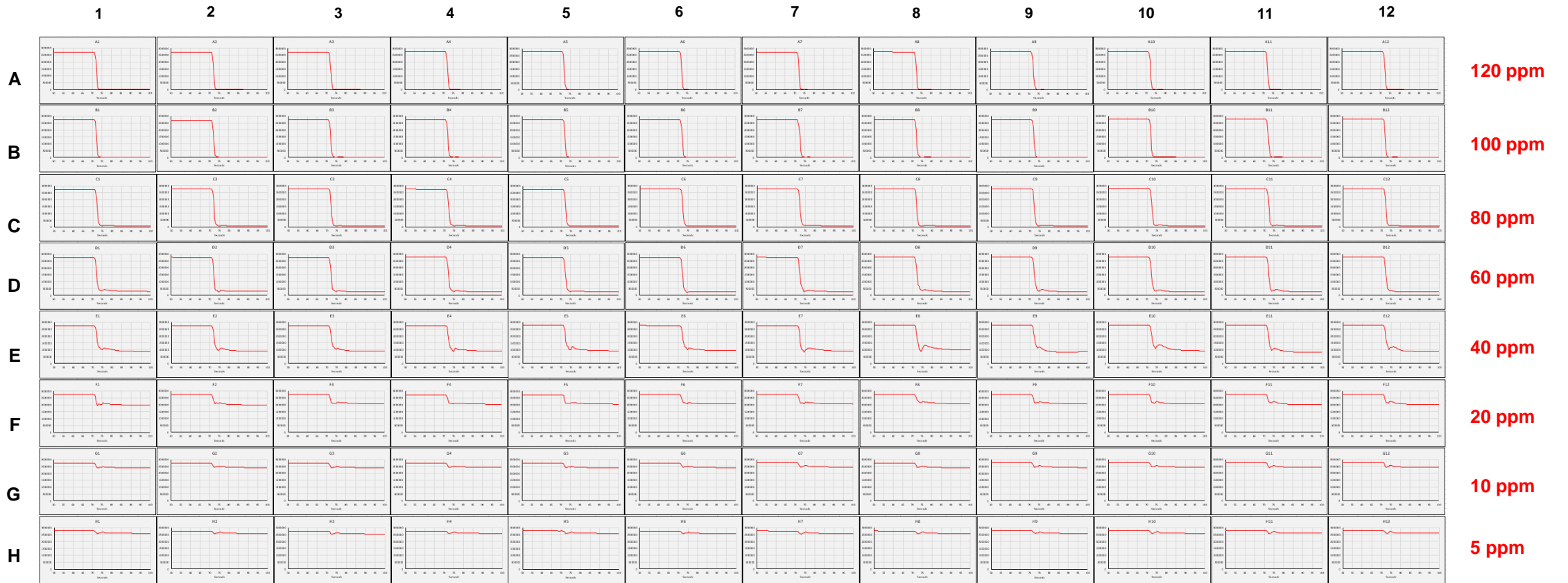


Digital Resolution = 0.109 ppb

Raw Data



Raw Data Frame



pH Stability Experiment Design

Excitation: 0.6 mW @ 435nm

140ul – Reagent Plate

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
B	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
C	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
D	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
E	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
F	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
G	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC	1250 ppm DDTC
H	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER



140ul – Simulated Acid Mine Drainage (SAMD) Plate

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER
B	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 20 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm	pH 1.5 10 ppm
C	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 20 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm	pH 2.0 10 ppm
D	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 20 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm	pH 2.5 10 ppm
E	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 20 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm	pH 3.0 10 ppm
F	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 20 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm	pH 3.5 10 ppm
G	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 20 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm	pH 4.0 10 ppm
H	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER	WATER

pH Stability

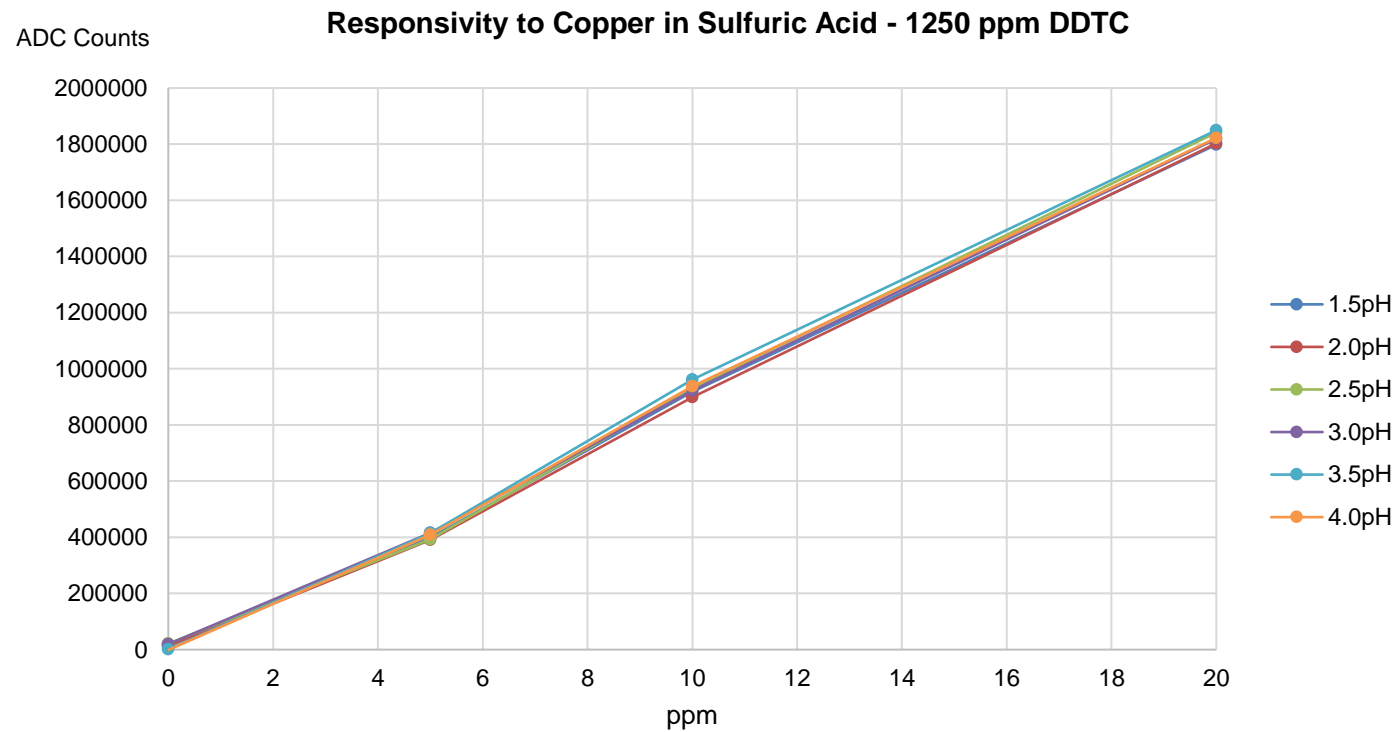
Test Parameters:

Temperature = 22 °C

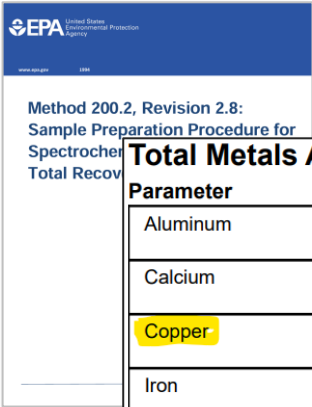
Excitation Power = 0.6 mW

Wavelength = 435 nm

Dilution Factor = 1



Copper Mining Use Case



Total Metals Analysis

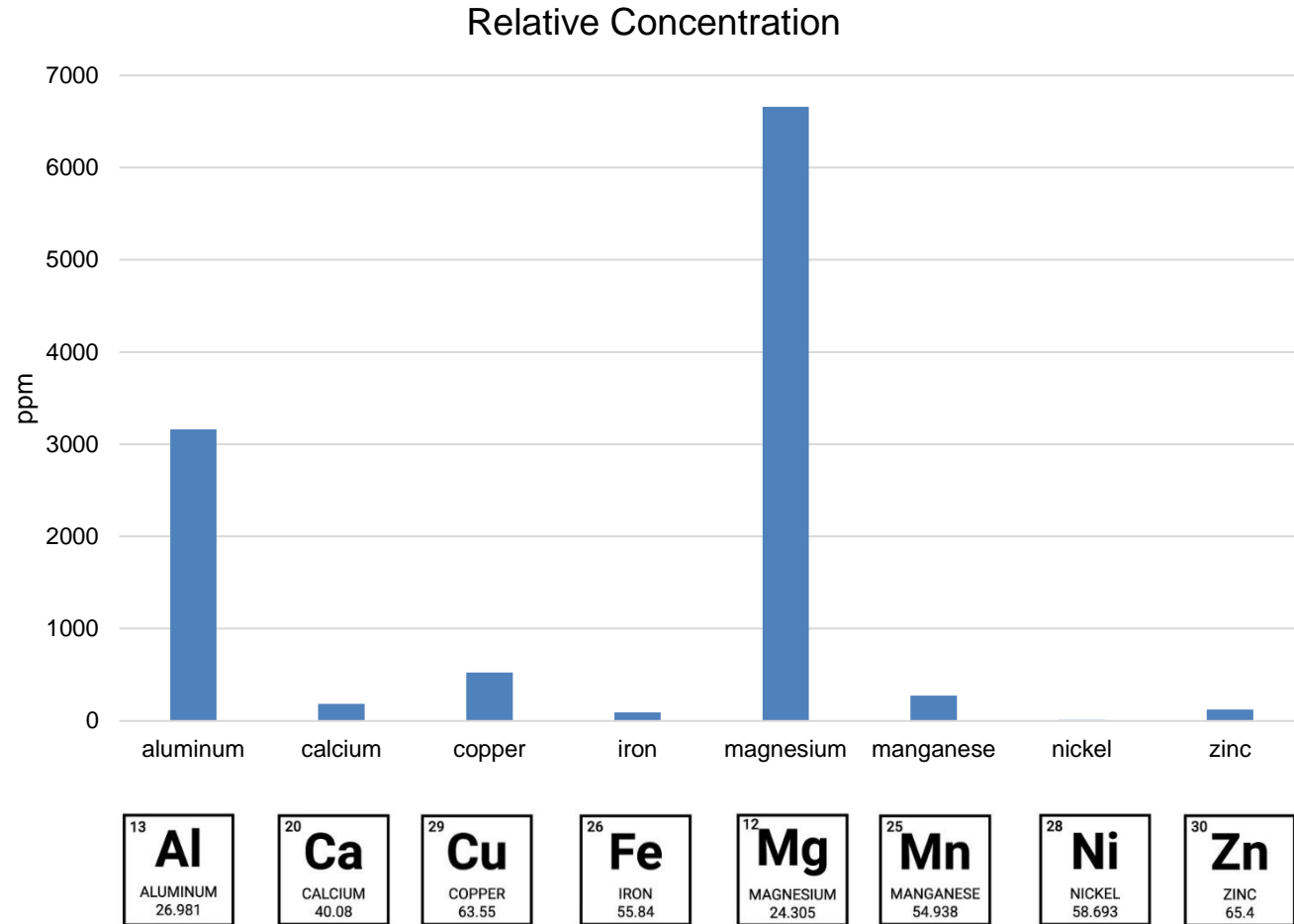
Parameter	Date Analyzed	Method	LOQ	Result	Units	Flag
Aluminum	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	25.0	3160	mg/L	3.E
Calcium	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	1.00	185	mg/L	3.E, 4.R
Copper	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	525	mg/L	3.E, C
Iron	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	0.20	91.8	mg/L	3.E, 5.P
Magnesium	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	10.0	6660	mg/L	3.E, 4.R
Manganese	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	273	mg/L	3.E, C
Nickel	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	0.05	7.59	mg/L	3.E
Zinc	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	124	mg/L	3.E

Date Prepared: 05/23/2025

Preparation Method: EPA 200.2



Copper Mining Use Case



Effect of Interferant Metals

Objectives:

- Determine which interferant metals cause a response by DDTC.
- Quantify the effective concentration of EDTA for mitigating interference.

Reagent Plates

PLATE TYPE	Description
Reagent Plate A	EDTA concentrations 0, 300, 1200, 4800
Reagent Plate B	EDTA concentrations 0, 600, 2400, 9600
Interferant Plate 5 ppm	Interferant Metals Only
Interferant Plate 10 ppm	Interferant Metals Only
Interferant Plate 20 ppm	Interferant Metals Only
SAMD Plate 5 ppm	Copper in the presence of Interferant 1:1 ratio
SAMD Plate 10 ppm	Copper in the presence of Interferant 1:1 ratio
SAMD Plate 20 ppm	Copper in the presence of Interferant 1:1 ratio

SAMD Plates

- Each SAMD plate was repeated with each Reagent plate.
- All Reagents contain 1250 ppm DDTC
- Each combination was repeated 3 times (3 columns each)

Table of Contents

	Reagent	SAMD
PLT056	Plate A	Interferant Plate 5 ppm
PLT057	Plate A	Interferant Plate 10 ppm
PLT058	Plate A	Interferant Plate 20 ppm
PLT050	Plate B	Interferant Plate 5 ppm
PLT051	Plate B	Interferant Plate 10 ppm
PLT052	Plate B	Interferant Plate 20 ppm
PLT059	Plate A	SAMD Plate 5 ppm
PLT060	Plate A	SAMD Plate 10 ppm
PLT061	Plate A	SAMD Plate 20 ppm
PLT062	Plate B	SAMD Plate 5 ppm
PLT063	Plate B	SAMD Plate 10 ppm
PLT064	Plate B	SAMD Plate 20 ppm

Effect of Interferant Metals

Objectives:

- Determine which interferant metals cause a response by DDTC.
- Quantify the effective concentration of EDTA for mitigating interference.

Reagent Plates

PLATE TYPE	Description
Reagent Plate A	EDTA concentrations 0, 300, 1200, 4800
Reagent Plate B	EDTA concentrations 0, 600, 2400, 9600
Interferant Plate 5 ppm	Interferant Metals Only
Interferant Plate 10 ppm	Interferant Metals Only
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Table of Contents

	Reagent	SAMD
PLT056	Plate A	Interferant Plate 5 ppm
PLT057	Plate A	Interferant Plate 10 ppm
PLT058	Plate A	Interferant Plate 20 ppm
PLT050	Plate B	Interferant Plate 5 ppm
PLT051	Plate B	Interferant Plate 10 ppm
PLT052	Plate B	Interferant Plate 20 ppm
PLT059	Plate A	SAMD Plate 5 ppm
PLT060	Plate A	SAMD Plate 10 ppm
PLT061	Plate A	SAMD Plate 20 ppm
PLT062	Plate B	SAMD Plate 5 ppm
PLT063	Plate B	SAMD Plate 10 ppm
PLT064	Plate B	SAMD Plate 20 ppm

PLT056



PLT050



PLT059



PLT062



PLT057



PLT051



PLT060



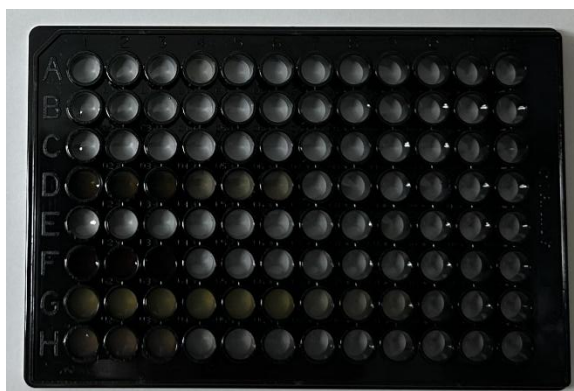
PLT063



PLT058



PLT052



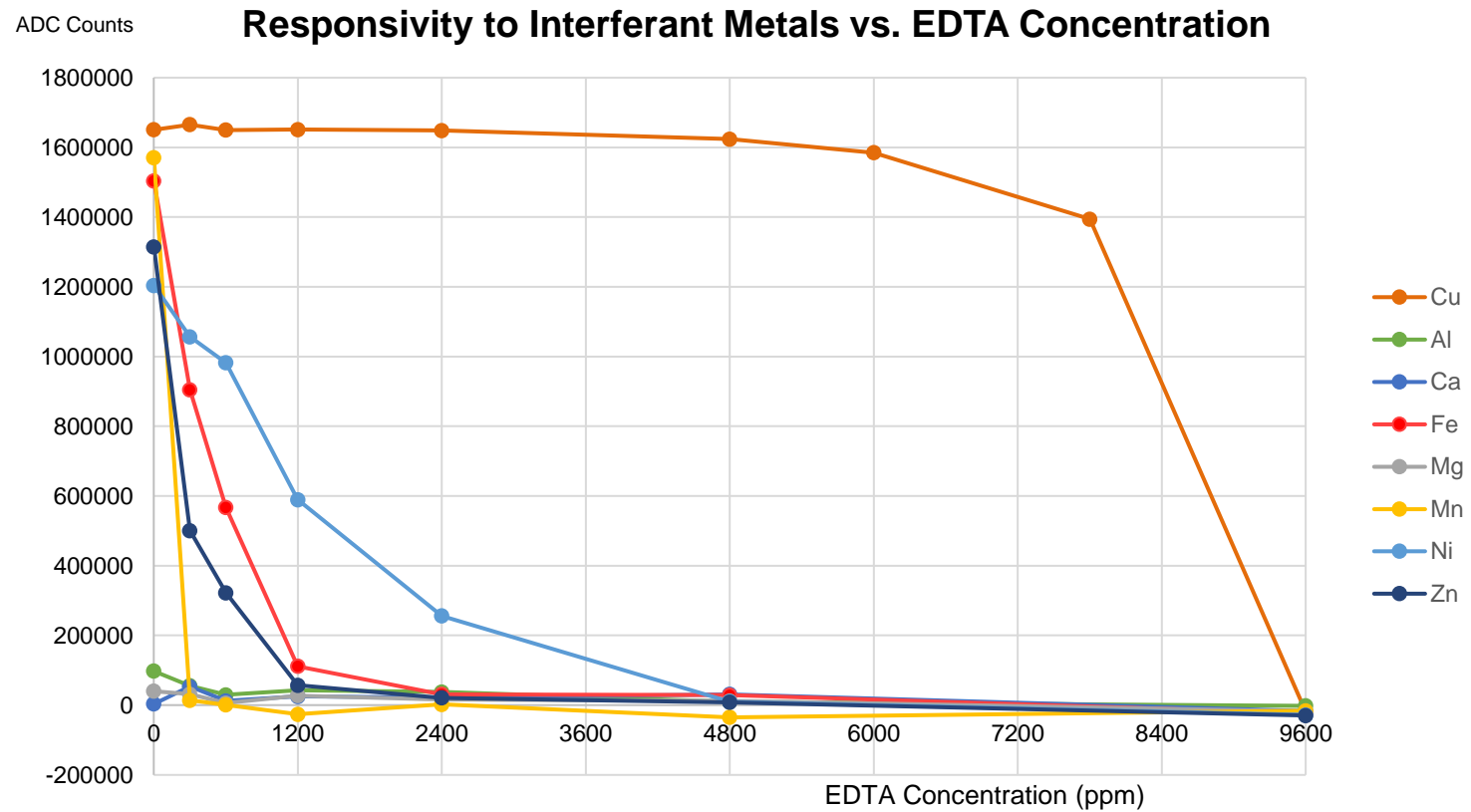
PLT061



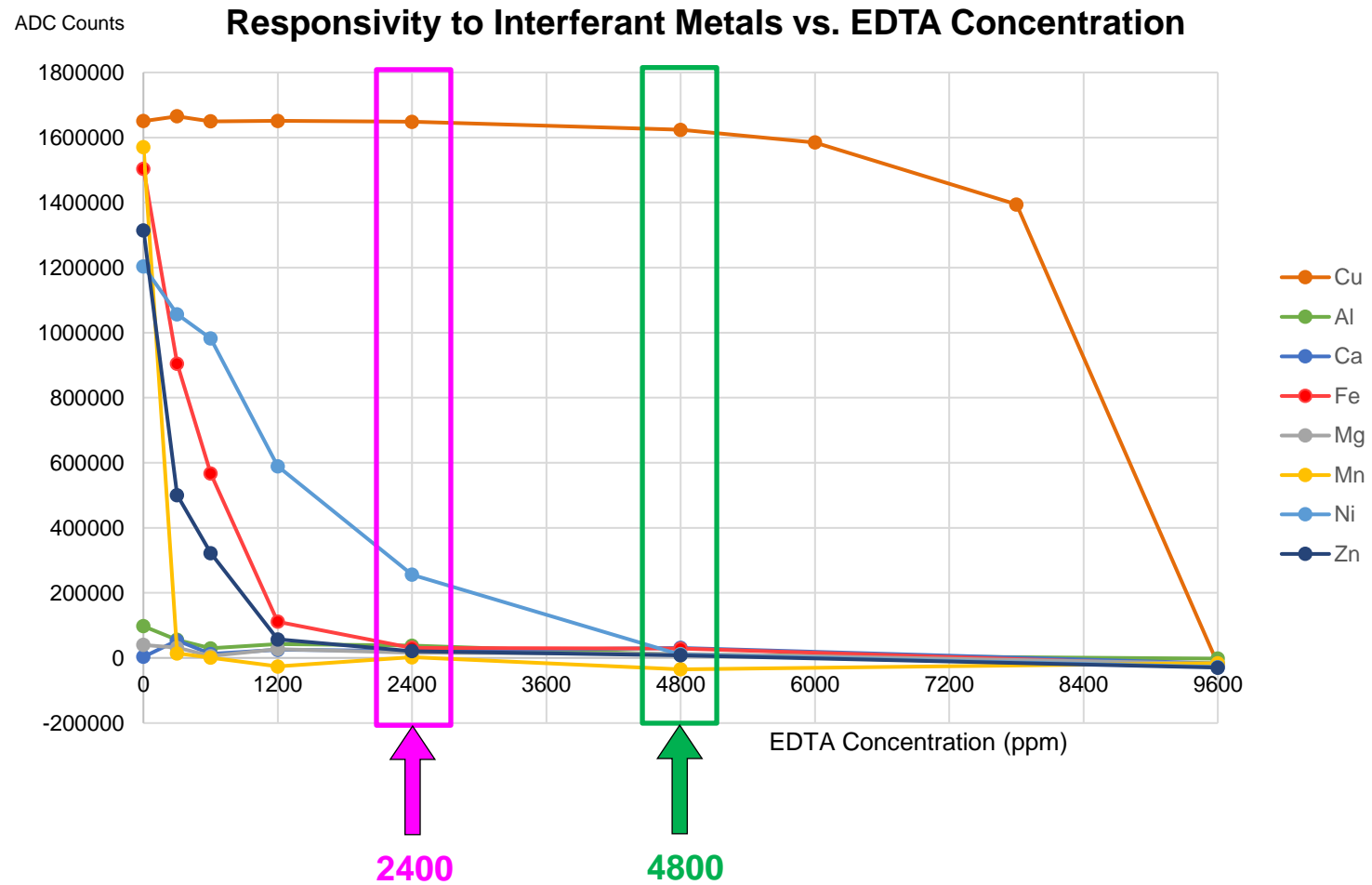
PLT064



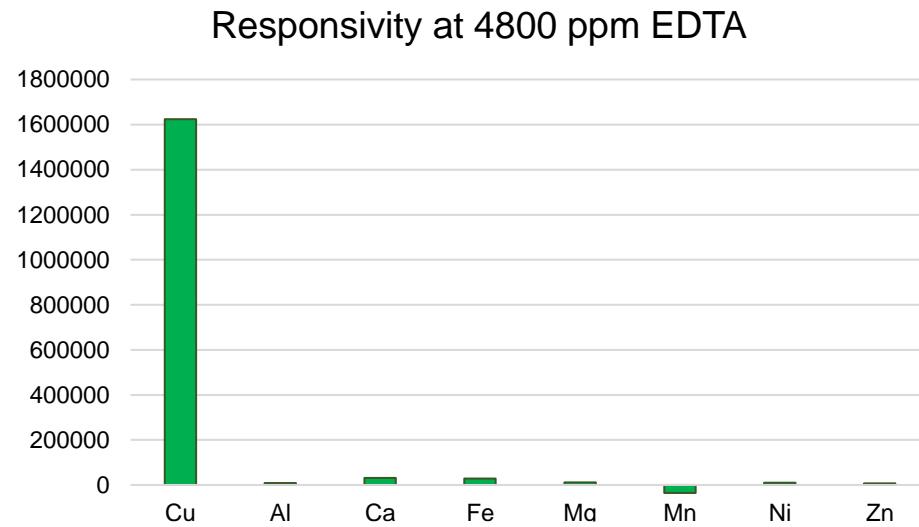
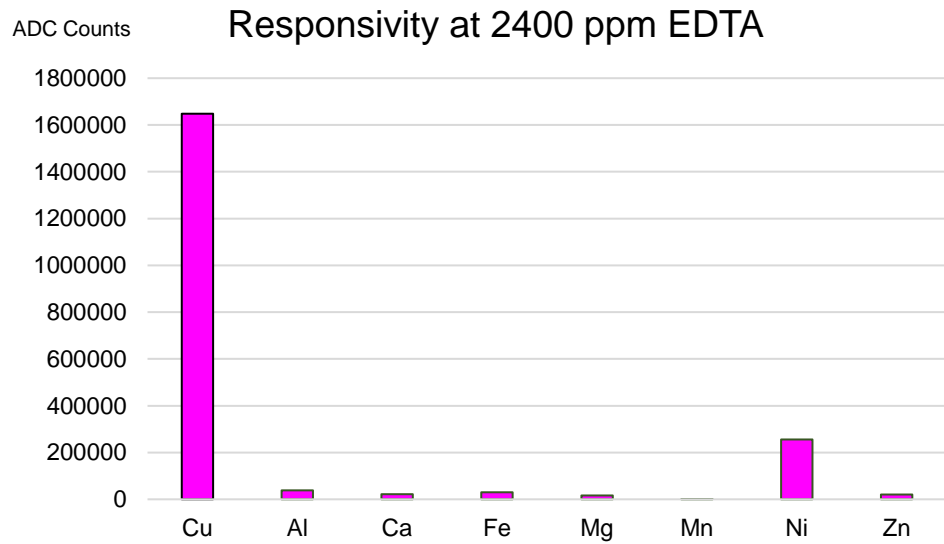
Selectivity for Copper



Selectivity for Copper

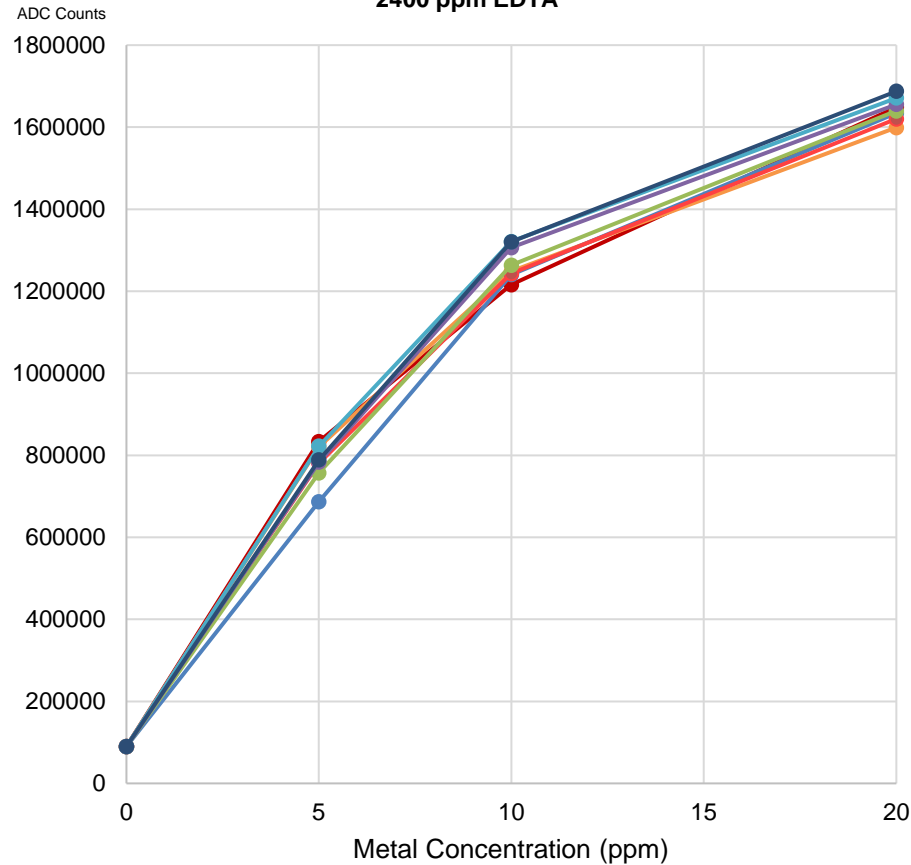


Selectivity for Copper

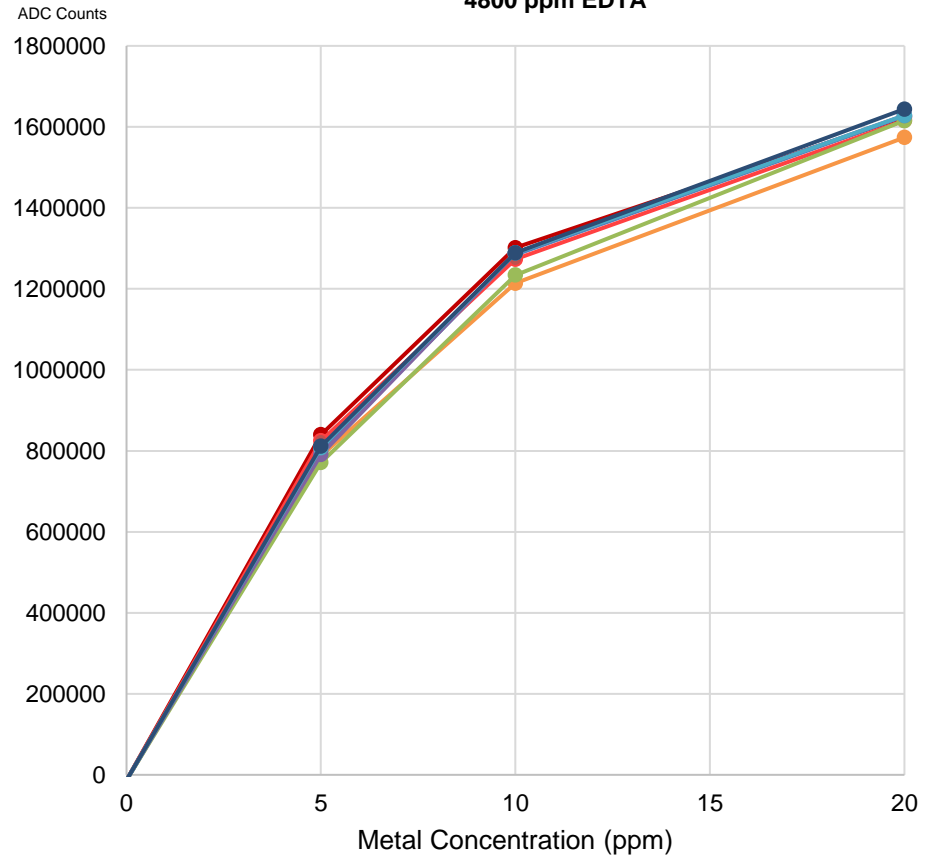


Responsivity in the Presence of Interferants

Responsivity to Copper in the Presence of Interfering Metals:
2400 ppm EDTA



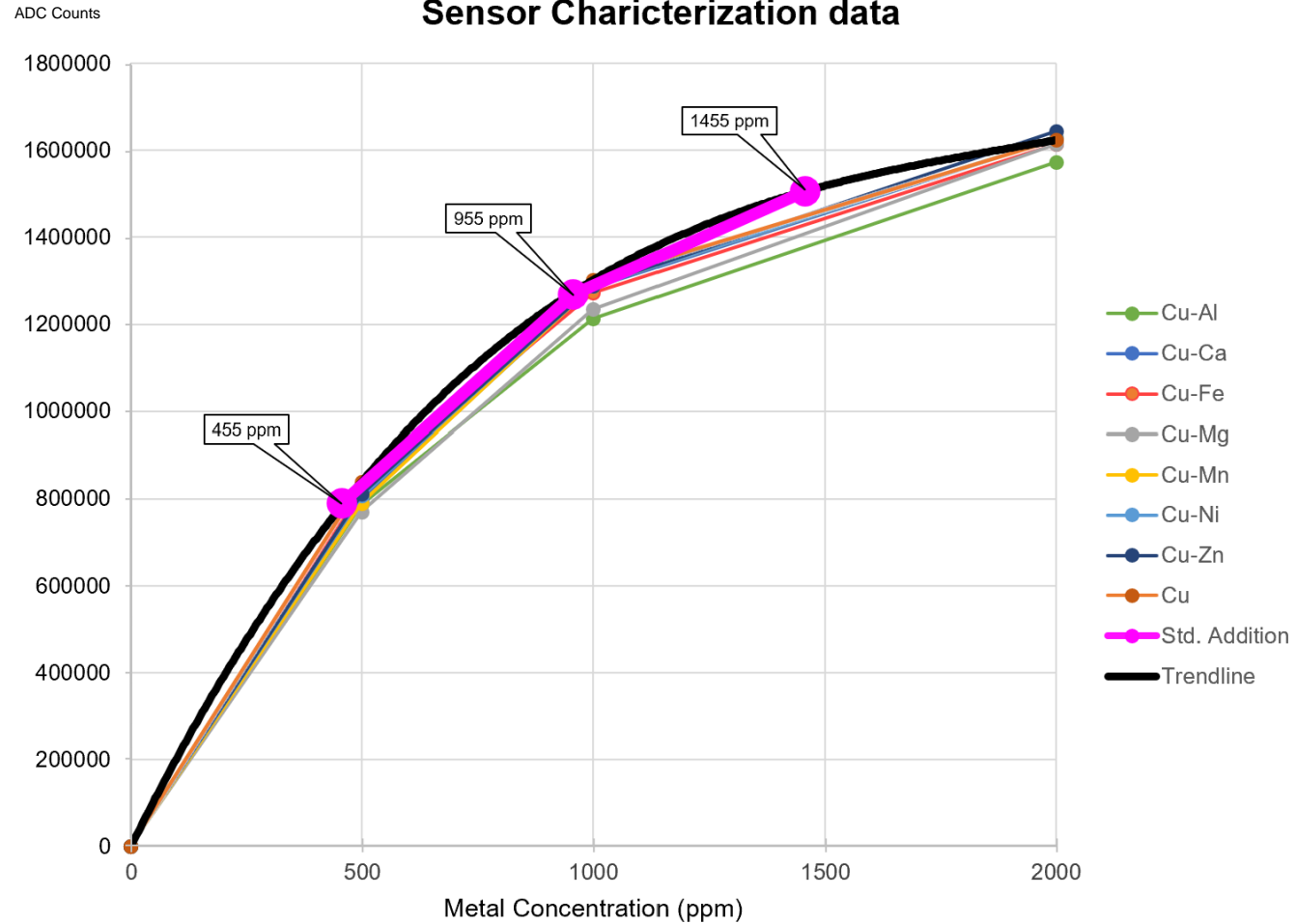
Responsivity to Copper in the Presence of Interfering Metals:
4800 ppm EDTA

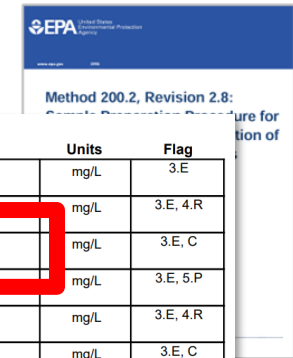
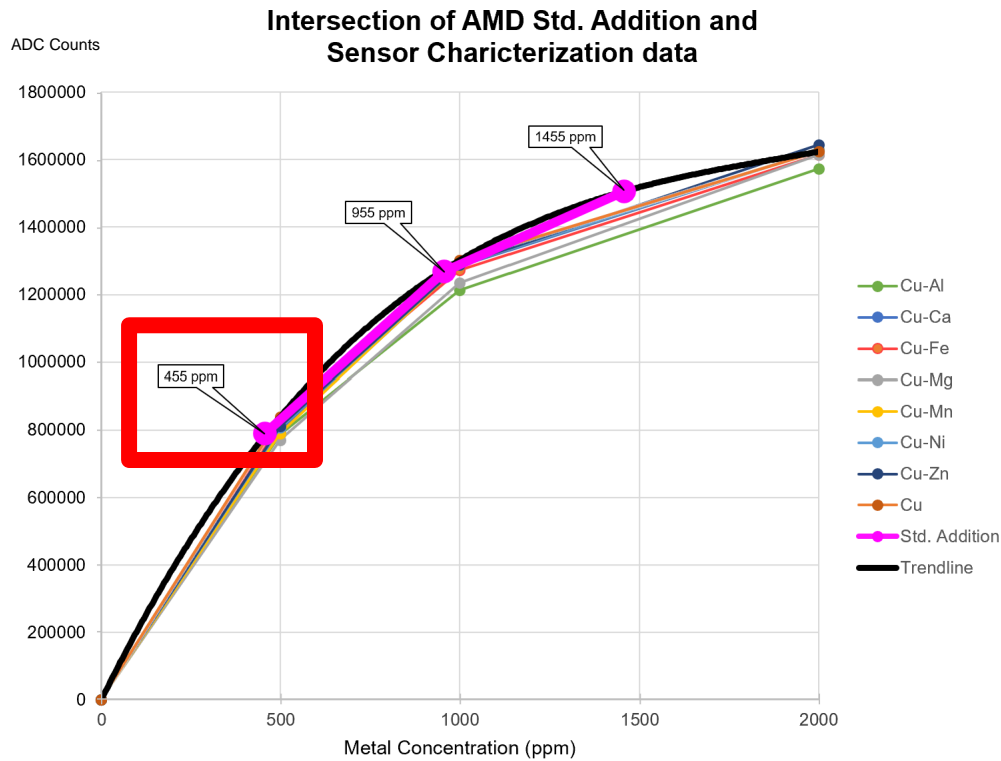


- Cu
- Cu-Al
- Cu-Ca
- Cu-Fe
- Cu-Mg
- Cu-Mn
- Cu-Ni
- Cu-Zn

Standard Addition to AMD

Intersection of AMD Std. Addition and Sensor Characterization data





Total Metals Analysis

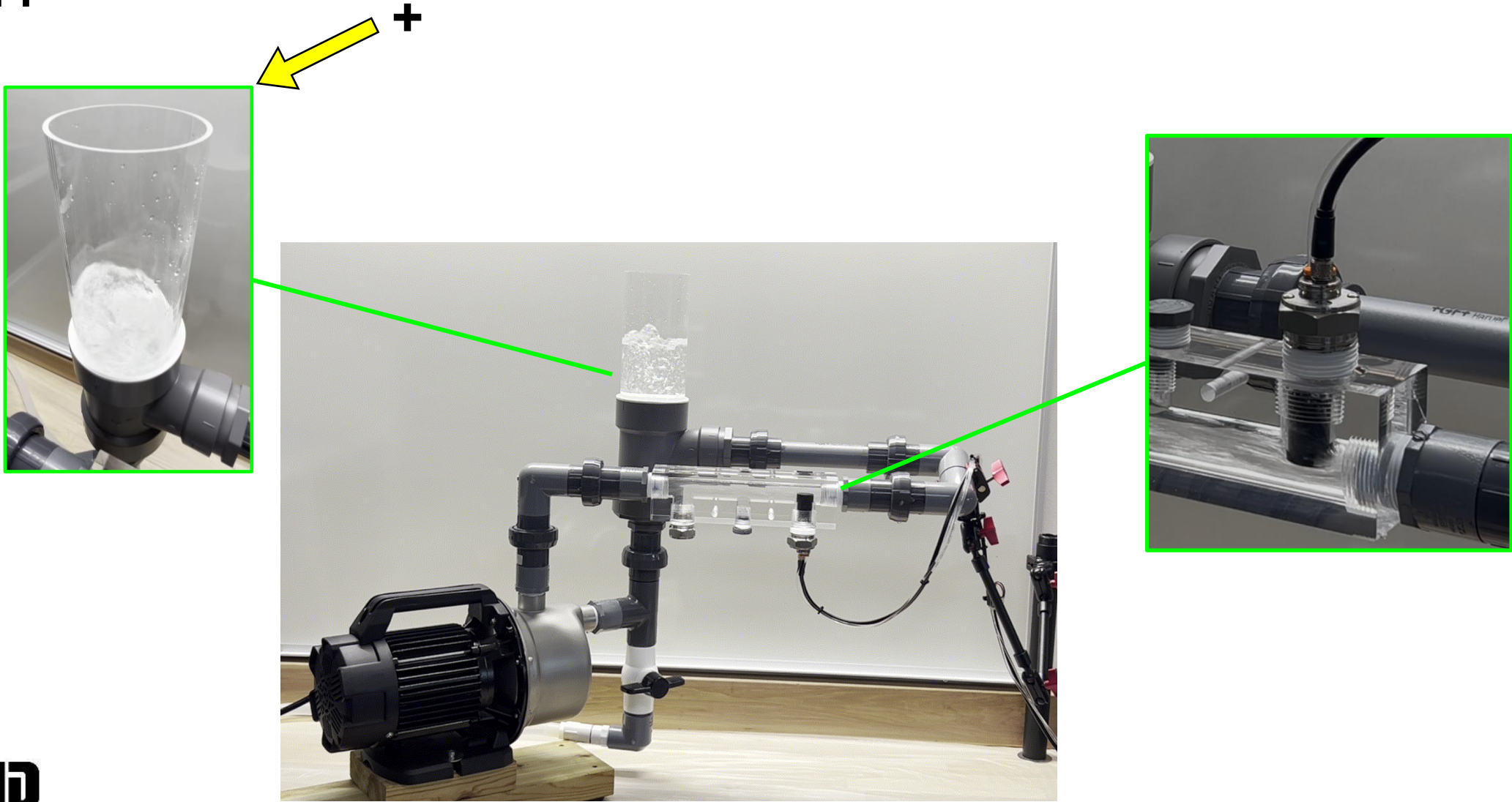
Parameter	Date Analyzed	Method	LOQ	Result	Units	Flag
Aluminum	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	25.0	3160	mg/L	3.E
		(1994)			mg/L	3.E, 4.R
Copper	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	525	mg/L	3.E, C
	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	0.00	0.0	mg/L	3.E, 5.P
Magnesium	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	10.0	6660	mg/L	3.E, 4.R
Manganese	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	273	mg/L	3.E, C
Nickel	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	0.05	7.59	mg/L	3.E
Zinc	05/23/2025	EPA 200.7, Rev. 4.4 (1994)	5.00	124	mg/L	3.E

Date Prepared: 05/23/2025

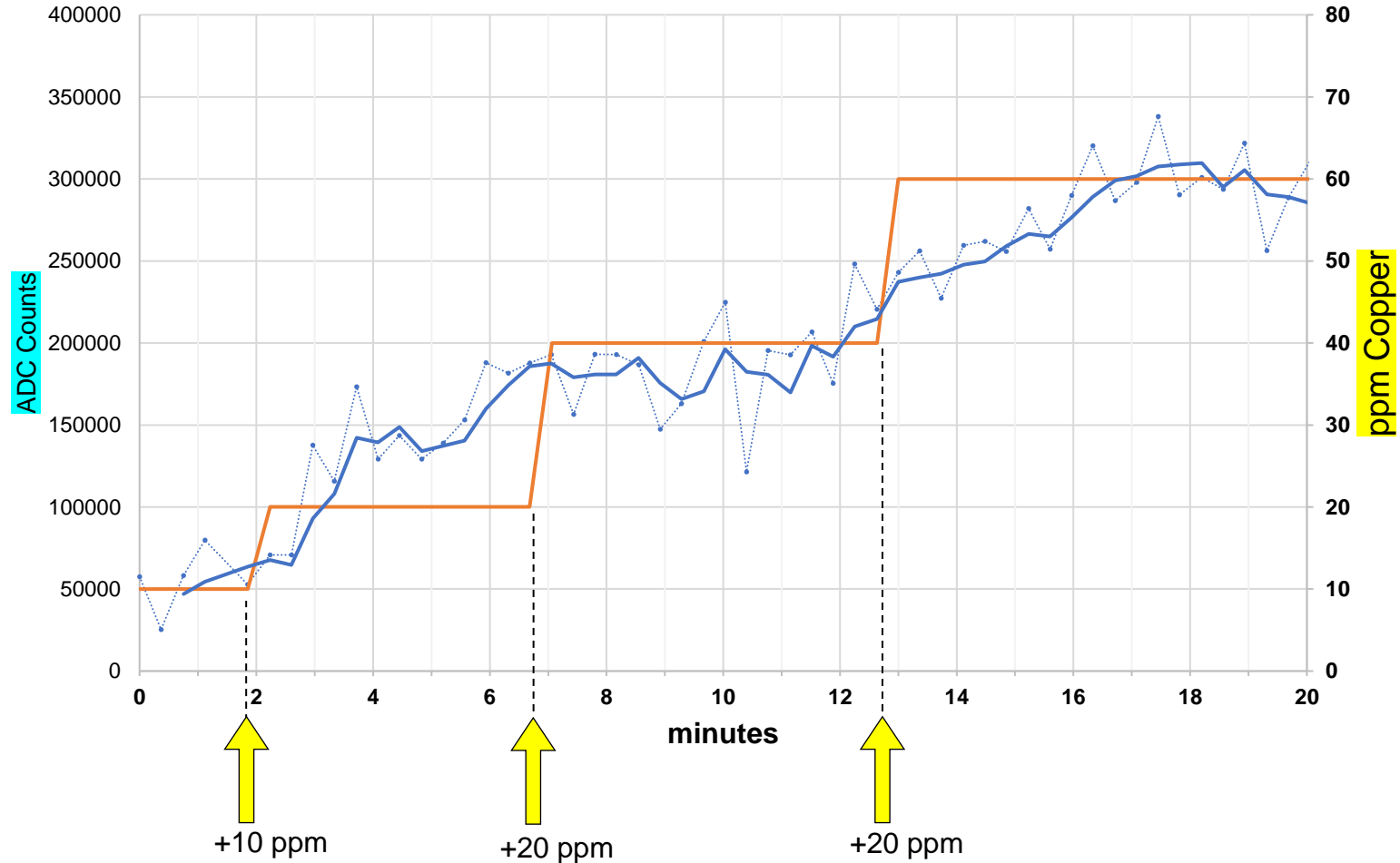
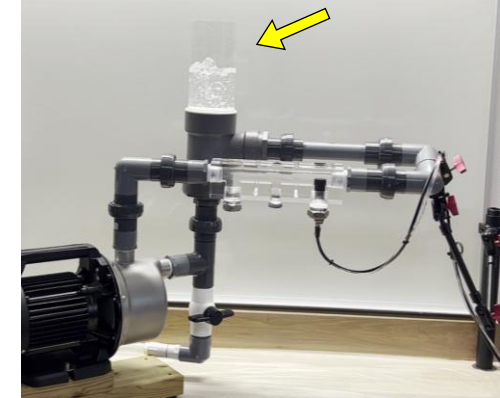
Preparation Method: EPA 200.2

$$\frac{525 - 455}{525} \times 100\% = 13\% \text{ error}$$

Apparatus



Continuous Monitoring of Copper Concentration



1

Refinery Process Control

Enable a new generation of intelligent hydrometallurgical processing.



2

Remote Monitoring

Monitor outflows 24-7, 365.



3

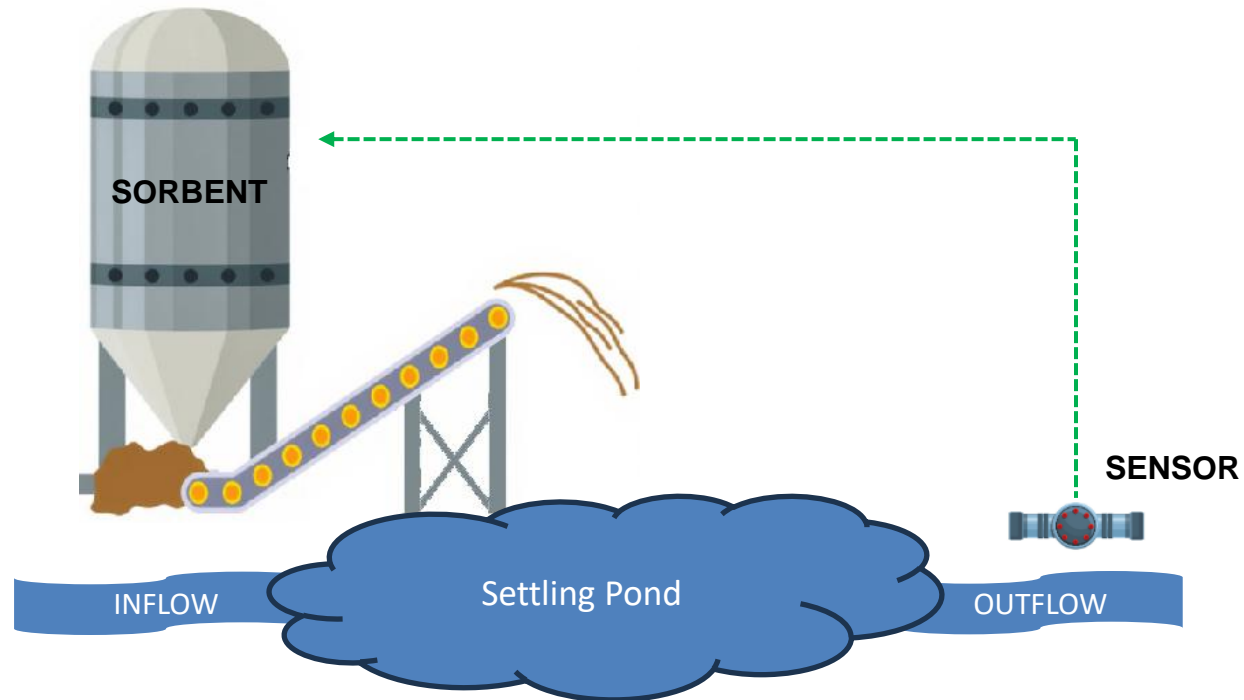
Geological Survey

Accelerate resource discovery.



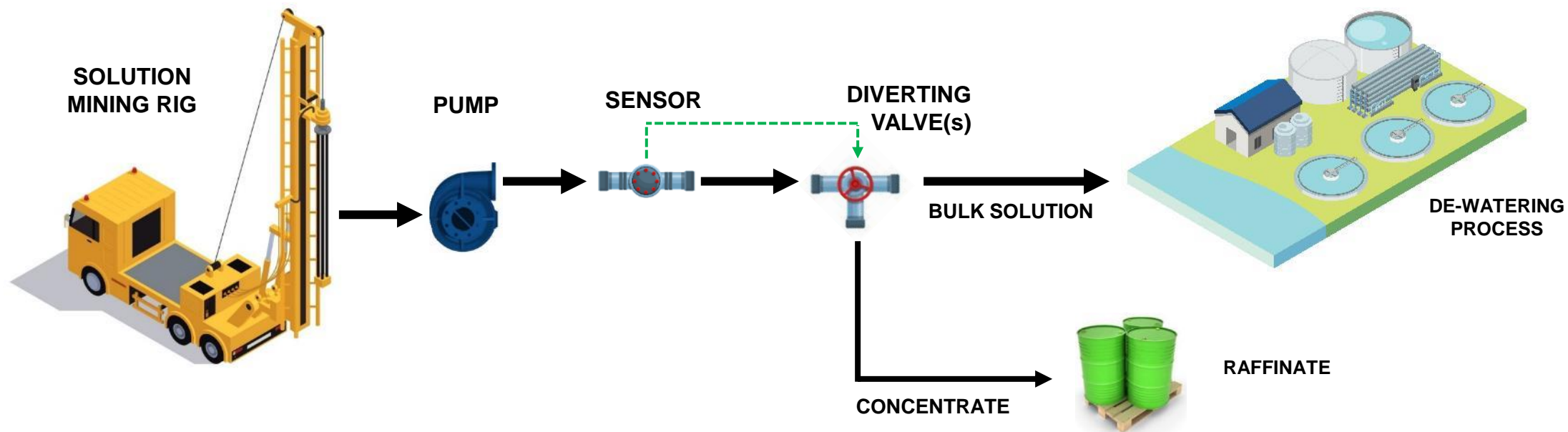
ENGINEERED SORBENT METERING – ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION

- Sorbent addition is triggered when sensors detect dissolved metal at the outflow.
- Sensors work 24/7 to ensure that discharge water is free of dissolved metal.



PASSIVE BINNING REFINEMENT – PROCESS CONTROL

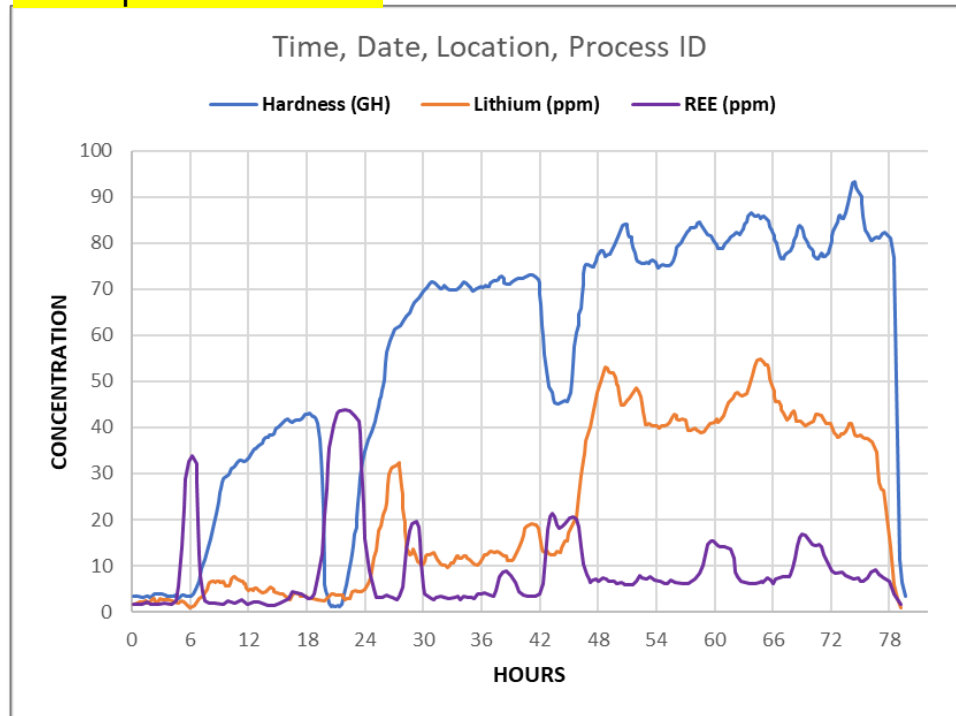
- Computer-controlled valves divert flow whenever the concentration of a target material falls above the programmed threshold.
- High-grade and low-grade solutions are automatically binned.



ADAPTIVE DRILLING – GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- Screen samples in the field.
- Adjust.
- Find deposits faster.

Conceptual Illustration



THANK YOU



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