

The FLIP Experiment: Testing the Relationship of Length of Upwelling Tubes to Maximize Upwelling Velocity

Anthony T. Jones, Ph.D.
Oceanographer
oceanUS consulting

Introduction

The Hydrocratic Generator is a patented technology that captures the free energy of mixing along a salinity gradient. The device consists of an open vertical tube and a fresh water injection system at its base that induces upwelling. The resulting upwelled water can be used to drive a turbine/generator for power generation.

A recent review of developments in salinity gradient technology was published in 2003 (see Jones and Finley, 2003). A manuscript describing the earlier efforts on developing hydrocratic power is under review (Finley et al., 2004).

A series of upwelling experiments were conducted onboard the Research Platform FLIP off San Diego, California in May, 2004. The objective was to test the relationship between length of upwelling tube and seawater entrainment or upwelling velocity. Tubes with an internal diameter of 45 cm (18 in.) and lengths of 31 m (100 ft.) to 62 m (200 ft.) were attached to the hull of FLIP and suspended vertically in the water column after FLIP converted to its vertical orientation. Freshwater was injected into the base of the vertical tubes at rates varying from $3.2 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ (500 gpm) to $6.3 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ (1000 gpm).

A “hydrocratic” effect was observed with a strong linear response to freshwater input. However, no difference in upwelling velocity was observed directly among the three tube lengths. A lower entrainment for the longest tube (200-ft) was inferred from salinity-derived calculations of the velocity.

Research Platform FLIP

The Floating Instrument Platform, FLIP, is a 355-ft non-propelled research platform, owned by the U.S. Navy and operated by the Marine Physical Laboratory of Scripps Institution of Oceanography. It is a highly stable platform, having the unique ability to flip from the horizontal position to the vertical position while at sea. This science platform was selected as a practical means to deploy three upwelling tubes of varying lengths. More details on the FLIP are available at the Scripps web site (www-mpl.ucsd.edu/resources/flip.intro.html).

Methods

Equipment Description

Three upwelling tubes (45 cm; 18" i.d.) were attached to the submersible section of *FLIP*, such that the tubes would be aligned vertically when the platform was in the "flipped" vertical position. The lengths of the three tubes were 100 ft. (31 m), 160 ft. (49 m), and 200 ft. (62 m). The tops of all three tubes were located 75 ft. (23 m) below the lower deck of *FLIP*, which positioned them 55 ft. (17 m) below the waterline when the platform was in the vertical orientation (Figure 1). Structural support for the upwelling tubes was provided by three steel cables running flush along the inner walls of each tube and secured under tension to a tripod at either end.

At the top of each upwelling tube, a temperature-salinity probe (YSI 30M Temperature-Salinity Meter) was installed 8" (20 cm) below the end of the tube. General Oceanics digital flow meters (Model 2135) were positioned 24" (60 cm) below the top end of the tubes (Figure 2). An internally-logging Conductivity-Temperature-Depth instrument (CTD, AML STD12+) was attached to *FLIP*'s hull, such that the sensors were aligned 3 ft. (~ 1 m) above the bottom end of the 200 ft. (62 m) upwelling tube in approximately 78 m (256 ft.) water depth (see Figure 3).

A down tube (PVC, 10 cm; 4" i.d.) was installed alongside each of the upwelling tubes. Each of the down tubes ran through a 180° bend at the bottom of its respective upwelling tube, terminating in an injector that directed the outflow from the down tube directly into the entrance of the upwelling tube (Figures 1-2). The distance between the injectors and the bottom end of the upwelling tubes was 21" (± 1 ") (~ 53 cm). Flexible hoses connected the tops of each of the down tubes to a manifold located on *FLIP*'s lower deck, and an externally-mounted ultrasonic flow meter (EASZ-10FP) was installed to measure the flow delivered to the manifold.

Experimental Procedure

FLIP and a support barge equipped with four 19,000-gal (72 m³) freshwater storage tanks were towed to a position roughly 8.5 miles (13.7 km) off the coast to the north of San Diego (32° 52' N, 117° 27' W). The *FLIP* operated in free drifting mode, drifting south-southeast over the course of the experiment.

Prior to flipping, the CTD was turned on to start logging data. After the platform reached its vertical "flipped" position, the manifold was connected to a hose running from a pump on the support barge that could deliver either fresh water contained in the storage tanks or surface seawater to the manifold.

The valves on the manifold were manipulated to direct the flow from the barge pump to the down tube for the 100 ft. upwelling tube while sealing off the other two down tubes. The pump speed was adjusted to produce flow through the down tube at

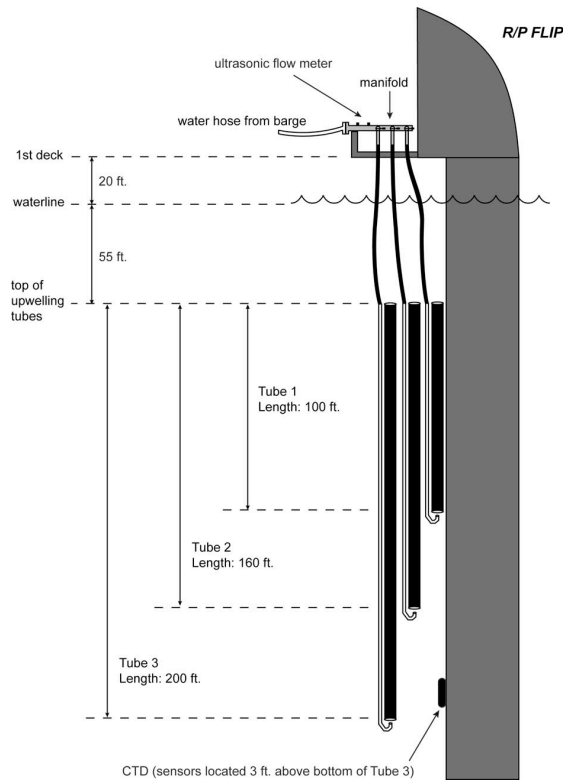


Figure 1. Arrangement of upwelling tubes on FLIP.

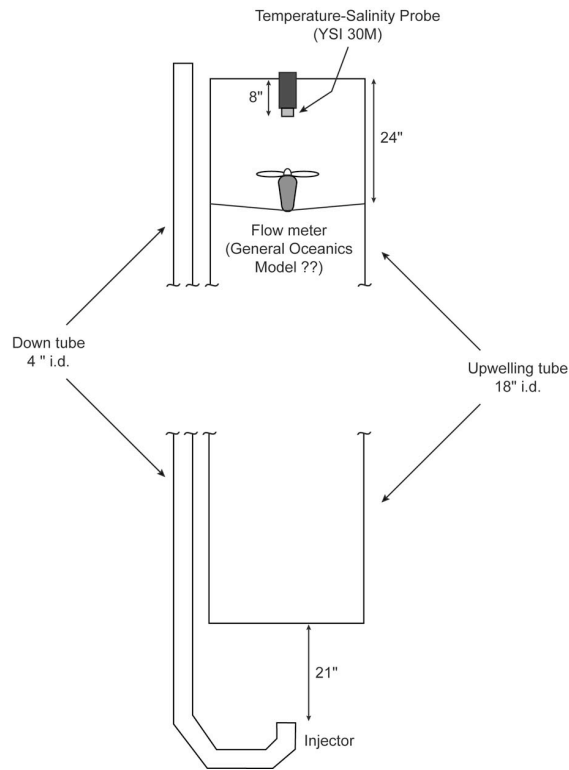


Figure 2. Schematic illustration of injector and instrumentation.

rates of 500 – 1,000 gallons-per-minute (gpm). At each of the flow rates for the down tube, several readings of temperature, salinity, and flow velocity were made at the top of the upwelling tube. This procedure was repeated for the 160 ft. and 200 ft. upwelling tubes.

After all of the freshwater runs were completed, the pump intake was switched to surface seawater. The manifold valves were adjusted to deliver the pump outflow to the down tube of the 100 ft. upwelling tube, and the pump speed was adjusted to produce a range of flows as was done in the fresh water runs. At each of the flow rates for the down tube, several readings of temperature, salinity, and flow velocity were made at the top of the upwelling tube. This procedure was repeated for the 160 ft. and 200 ft. upwelling tubes. After completing all of the seawater runs, the barge pump hose was disconnected from the manifold and *FLIP* was returned to the horizontal “tow” position. The CTD was switched off upon return to the dock.

Results

Field measurements from the *FLIP* experiment are tabulated in Appendix A. Two approaches were conceived to analyze the upwelling velocity. First, the linear velocity was measured directly with a digital flow meter as described above. Second, the temperature and salinity of the out flowing water was recorded to indirectly calculate the flow rates assuming conservation of salt.

Direct Flow Rate Measurements

Freshwater (and seawater as a control) was injected into the base of the vertical upwelling tubes at rates varying from 500 gpm ($3.2 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$) to 1000 gpm ($6.3 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$). The direct measurement of linear velocity of water exiting the top of the tubes ranged from 2.95 mph to 4.95 mph with an average velocity of 4.13 ± 0.54 mph. This is equivalent to a volumetric flow in the range of from 3,441 gpm to 5,776 gpm, given the diameter of the upwelling tube. The average exit flow rate was $4,821 \pm 635$ gpm. Data are presented graphically in Figure 3 below.

In examining the difference between the tube lengths, over the range of conditions tested in the *FLIP* experiment, there was no significant difference in the response of the three lengths of upwelling tubes. A strong linear response to the injection of freshwater was observed in all three cases (see Table 1).

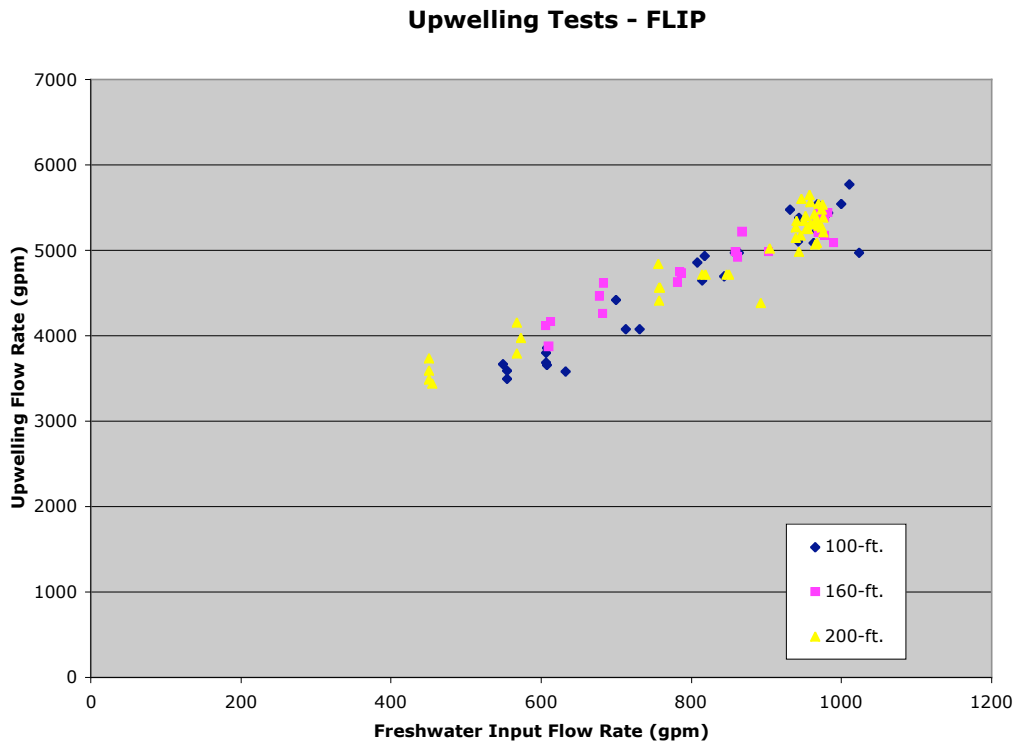


Figure 3. Relationship of freshwater flow rate to upwelling flow rate for three tube lengths.

Table 1.
Analysis of linear relationship between freshwater injected and upwelled seawater.

Length of Upwelling Tube (ft.)	Slope (β)	Correlation Coefficient	Count
100	4.30	0.9608	29
160	3.29	0.9587	22
200	3.45	0.9528	42

Note: In linear regression, a mathematical relationship is established to fit the equation $y = \alpha + \beta x$, where β is the slope of the line and α is the y-axis intercept.

In the linear regression, the β coefficient (or slope) is a measure of the seawater entrainment. Regression coefficients approaching 1.00 are perfectly linear.

Seawater Controls

Surface seawater was used as an experimental control to account for pumping of water from the barge up to the elevated platform on FLIP. The surface seawater was slightly less dense than the water at the bottom of the upwelling tubes (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Density of seawater

Water Depth (ft.)	Temperature (°C)	Salinity (psu)	Density (g/cm ³)
Surface	19.2	34.91	1.0249
155	12.2	35.75	1.0273
215	9.8	35.37	1.0276
255	9.6	35.46	1.0273

Note: Practical Salinity Units or PSU are equivalent to parts per thousand.

Since there is no statistical difference between the length of upwelling tube on the upwelling velocity, we can pool the experimental results from the freshwater tests and examine the introduction of surface seawater into the Hydrocratic System. In comparing the input of freshwater versus seawater, there is an obvious “hydrocratic” effect as shown in the shift in the trend lines as seen in Figure 4.

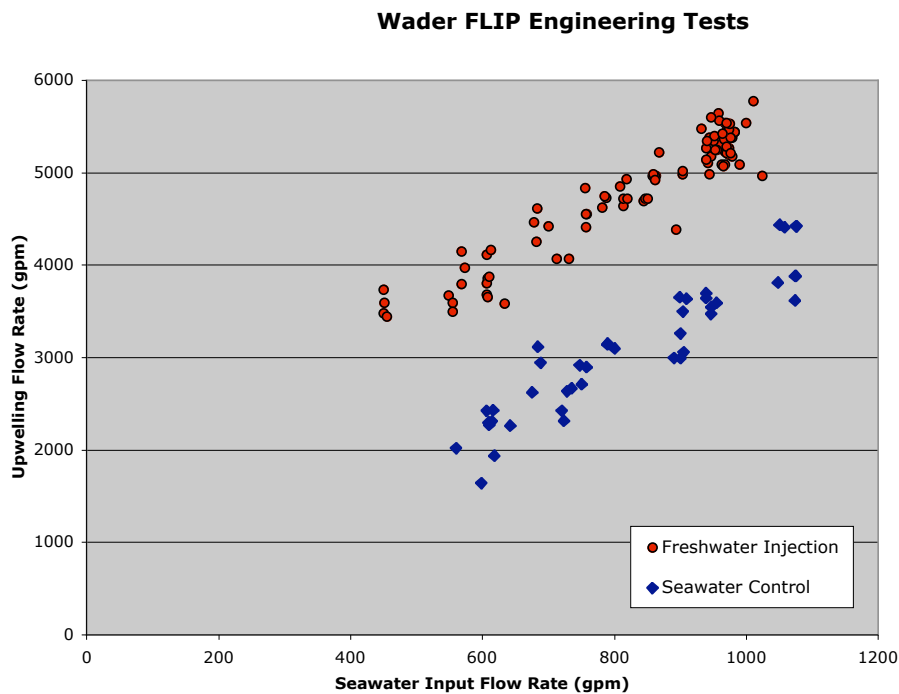


Figure 4. Pooled results of freshwater injections compared with seawater injection.

Indirect Flow Rate Measurements

In our second approach, the velocity of water exiting the upwelling tubes was determined algebraically assuming conservation of salt (see Appendix B). Salinity was measured at the top of each vertical tube and ambient seawater conditions were recorded on the CTD during descent and ascent. Vertical profiles acquired during “flipping” are similar to archival data for off San Diego (Jones 2001, unpublished report).

Presented below are the results of the calculation for volumetric flow rate exiting the top of the upwelling tube based primarily on salinity (Figure 5). The longer tube had a calculated lower upwelling flow rate than the other two tubes. Several assumptions are incorporated in these calculations including utilizing the density and salinity for the upwelled water from values identified in Table 2 above. We also assume that the density of the freshwater pumped into the system was at or near 1.000 g/cm^3 .

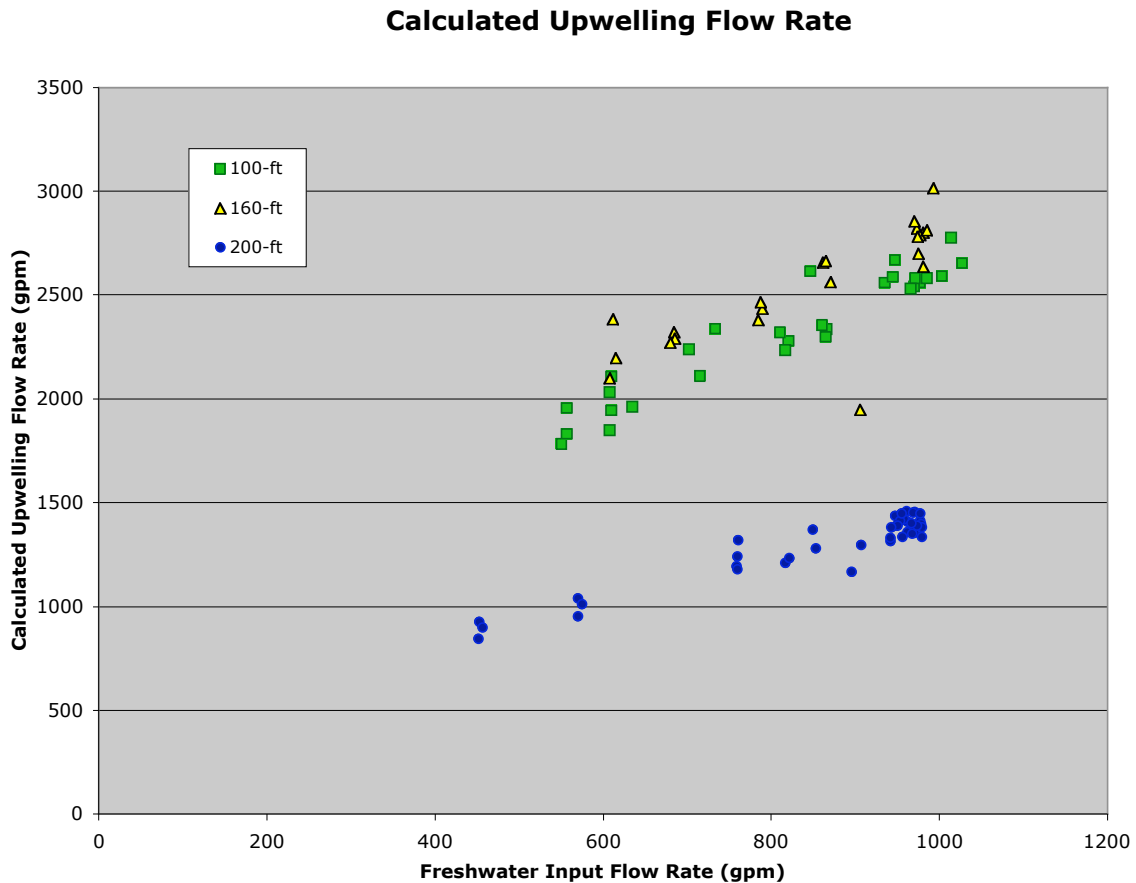


Figure 5. Calculated flow rate exiting the upwelling tube based on salinity values.

The linear relationship between freshwater injected into the system and the upwelled water still holds. However, the slope of the relationship is less. In comparing the direct measured flow rates with the calculated flow rates, either the direct flow reading over estimate the velocity or the calculated flow rates underestimate the actual upwelled flow. A graph illustrating this point is presented below (Figure 6). At higher input flow rates, the calculated upwelling flow rates appear to flatten, indicating that not enough time for complete mixing has occurred or that not enough seawater could enter the system at the bottom of the upwelling tube.

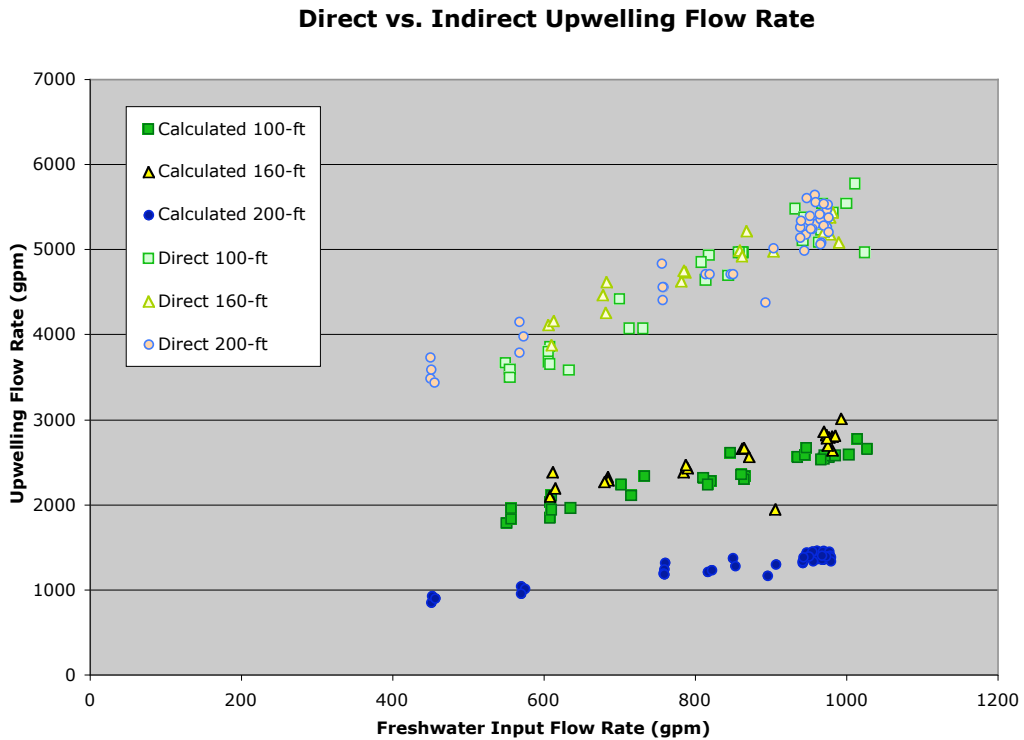


Figure 6. Direct and calculated volumetric upwelling rates for three tube lengths.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Freitas of ONR for authorizing a 1-day FLIP cruise. We also thank Bill Gaines, Tom Golfinos and George Trekas of MPL/FLIP.

References

Finley, W., E. Pscheidt, and A.T. Jones (2004). Hydrocratic Generator: A Technology for Capturing Energy from Salinity Gradients. (Manuscript in review).

Jones, A.T. and W. Finley (2003). Recent Developments in Salinity Gradient Power. OCEANS 2003, pp. 2284- 2287.

Appendices

Appendix A. Measured Field Data from May 20, 2004

Appendix B. Calculation of Velocity Exiting Vertical Tube.

Appendix A. Measured Values for the FLIP Experiment, 20 May 2004.

UpTube Length □ (ft)	□ Time	Source Water		Upwelling		
		Flow (gpm)	Pressure (psi)	Linear Velocity (m/s)	Salinity (ppt)	Temp. (°C)
□		Freshwater		□		□
100	14:11:00	1000	35	2.124	26.1	14.0
100	14:12:00	1011	□	2.214	26.5	13.9
100	14:13:00	1024	□	1.905	26.1	14.1
100	14:13:30	863	□	1.905	26.4	13.7
100	14:14:00	844	20	1.800	27.3	13.6
100	14:15:00	713	<5	1.561	27.0	13.7
100	14:15:30	731	<5	1.561	27.5	13.5
100	14:17:00	700	□	1.695	27.5	13.5
100	14:18:00	549	~0	1.407	27.6	13.4
100	14:18:30	555	~0	1.377	28.1	13.2
100	14:19:00	555	~0	1.341	27.7	13.4
100	14:19:30	608	~0	1.480	28.0	13.3
100	14:21:00	606	□	1.411	27.2	13.5
100	14:21:45	606	□	1.457	27.8	13.3
100	14:22:15	608	□	1.400	27.5	13.4
100	14:24:00	633		1.373	27.3	13.5
100	14:42:00	818	~19	1.892	26.6	13.7
100	14:42:30	808	~15	1.861	26.8	13.6
100	14:43:00	814	~15	1.780	26.5	13.6
100	14:44:00	862	~23	1.905	26.3	13.9
100	14:44:30	858	20 - 25	1.905	26.5	13.8
100	14:45:30	932	□	2.101	26.5	13.8
100	14:46:00	942	□	1.957	26.5	13.8
100	14:46:30	944	□	2.063	26.7	13.8
100	14:47:46	974	35	1.991	26.2	13.9
100	14:47:50	982	35	2.085	26.2	13.9
100	14:48:30	967	□	2.005	26.2	13.9
100	14:49:00	968	□	2.124	26.3	13.9
100	14:49:15	963	□	1.950	26.2	13.9
160	14:51:30	903	25 - 50	1.910	24.5	13.0
160	14:56:30	606	□	1.578	27.7	12.8
160	14:57:00	610	□	1.484	28.4	12.6
160	14:57:30	613	□	1.596	27.9	12.6
160	14:58:00	682	□	1.632	27.6	12.8
160	14:58:30	683	□	1.769	27.5	12.9
160	14:58:45	678	□	1.711	27.5	12.9
160	14:59:30	782	□	1.774	26.9	13.2
160	15:00:00	787	□	1.814	27.0	13.1
160	15:00:30	785	□	1.820	27.1	13.1
160	15:01:00	859	□	1.911	27.0	13.4
160	15:01:30	862	□	1.886	27.0	13.2

Appendix A. Measured Values for the FLIP Experiment, 20 May 2004 (continued).

UpTube Length □ (ft)	□ Time	Source Water		Upwelling		
		Flow (gpm)	Pressure (psi)	Linear Velocity (m/s)	Salinity (ppt)	Temp. (°C)
160	15:01:45	868	□	2.001	26.7	13.3
160	15:02:30	990	40 - 45	1.950	26.9	13.2
160	15:02:45	978	"	1.984	26.5	13.4
160	15:03:00	970	"	1.998	26.6	13.4
160	15:03:15	974	"	2.063	26.5	13.4
160	15:03:30	978	□	2.063	26.1	13.5
160	15:03:45	972	□	2.085	26.3	13.5
160	15:04:00	982	□	2.085	26.5	13.4
160	15:04:15	971	□	2.104	26.5	13.4
160	15:04:18	967	□	2.033	26.7	13.3
200	15:12:30	450	□	1.335	30.5	10.0
200	15:13:20	450	□	1.432	23.5	12.3
200	15:13:45	451	□	1.377	24.2	11.9
200	15:14:00	455	□	1.319	23.9	11.9
200	15:14:45	568	□	1.454	23.3	12.3
200	15:15:00	573	□	1.524	23.0	12.5
200	15:15:30	568	□	1.591	22.6	12.6
200	15:16:15	758	□	1.747	22.9	12.5
200	15:16:30	757	□	1.690	22.4	13.0
200	15:16:40	756	□	1.855	22.1	13.0
200	15:17:00	757	□	1.747	22.0	13.0
200	15:17:30	847	□	1.808	22.3	13.1
200	15:17:55	814	□	1.808	21.6	13.2
200	15:18:15	819	□	1.808	21.7	13.2
200	15:18:30	850	□	1.808	21.7	13.2
200	15:19:00	944	□	1.911	21.8	13.1
200	15:19:15	974	□	2.098	21.4	13.3
200	15:19:30	967	□	2.041	21.7	13.1
200	15:19:45	959	□	2.033	21.5	13.3
200	15:19:50	955	□	2.012	21.6	13.2
200	15:20:00	958	□	2.164	21.8	13.1
200	15:20:15	950	□	2.048	21.6	13.2
200	15:20:22	946	□	1.984	21.5	13.3
200	15:20:35	952	□	2.070	21.8	13.1
200	15:20:45	966	□	2.055	21.7	13.2
200	15:21:00	974	□	2.019	21.6	13.2
200	15:21:15	959	□	2.132	21.2	13.2
200	15:21:25	970	□	2.026	21.3	13.2
200	15:21:45	967	□	1.950	21.1	13.2
200	15:22:00	965	□	1.943	21.1	13.3
200	15:22:30	975	□	2.121	21.3	13.3
200	15:22:40	976	□	2.063	21.2	13.3
200	15:22:50	976	□	1.998	20.9	13.4

Appendix A. Measured Values for the FLIP Experiment, 20 May 2004 (continued).

UpTube Length (ft)	□ Time	Source Water		Upwelling		
		Flow (gpm)	Pressure (psi)	Linear Velocity (m/s)	Salinity (ppt)	Temp. (°C)
		Freshwater		□		□
200	15:23:00	970	□	2.124	21.3	13.2
200	15:23:15	964	□	2.078	21.4	13.3
200	15:23:25	953	□	2.012	21.1	13.3
200	15:23:35	947	□	2.148	21.5	13.1
200	15:23:45	939		1.970	21.1	13.3
200	15:24:00	939	□	2.019	21.2	13.2
200	15:24:10	940		2.048	21.5	13.1
200	15:24:20	904	□	1.924	21.3	13.1
200	15:24:40	893		1.680	20.5	13.2
		Seawater		□		□
100	15:58:20	1050	~35	1.700	33.6	13.4
100	15:58:45	1048	□	1.461	33.6	13.6
100	15:59:00	1058	□	1.690	33.5	13.3
100	16:01:00	909	~18	1.393	33.6	13.5
100	16:01:30	904	□	1.341	33.5	13.2
100	16:02:00	899	□	1.400	33.6	13.4
100	16:02:45	790	~8	1.208	33.6	13.4
100	16:03:00	800	□	1.188	33.6	13.3
100	16:03:15	789	□	1.205	33.6	13.3
100	16:04:30	688	"0"	1.129	33.6	13.2
100	16:04:45	684	□	1.195	33.6	13.2
100	16:05:00	675	□	1.006	33.5	13.2
100	16:06:00	642	□	0.868	33.6	13.4
100	16:06:10	614	□	0.886	33.5	13.2
100	16:06:20	598	□	0.630	33.5	12.9
100	16:06:30	560	□	0.775	33.6	13.1
160	16:14:50	947	□	1.360	31.7	13.3
160	16:15:00	955	□	1.377	31.7	13.1
160	16:15:20	946	□	1.332	31.7	13.1
160	16:15:30	939	□	1.418	31.7	13.1
160	16:15:45	939	□	1.397	31.7	13.1
200	16:16:55	905	~30	1.173	31.4	10.2
200	16:17:10	900	□	1.250	31.4	10.0
200	16:17:25	900	□	1.147	31.8	
200	16:17:35	890	□	1.149	31.1	14.0
200	16:24:30	720	□	0.930	32.9	13.0
200	16:25:00	723	□	0.887	32.9	13.1
200	16:25:10	735		1.022	33.0	13.0
200	16:25:30	728	□	1.011	32.9	13.0
200	16:26:30	610	□	0.871	32.9	12.9
200	16:26:50	606		0.930	33.0	13.0
200	16:27:00	609	□	0.880	32.9	13.0

Appendix A. Measured Values for the FLIP Experiment, 20 May 2004 (continued).

UpTube Length □ (ft)	□ Time	Source Water		Upwelling		
		Flow (gpm)	Pressure (psi)	Linear Velocity (m/s)	Salinity (ppt)	Temp. (°C)
□		Seawater		□		□
200	16:27:15	618	□	0.743	33.0	13.0
200	16:27:30	616	□	0.932	32.9	12.8
160	16:29:00	1074	~45	1.488	33.1	10.8
160	16:29:15	1075	□	1.488	33.0	14.6
160	16:29:30	1074	□	1.387	33.2	13.4
160	16:29:40	1076	□	1.695	33.1	13.1
160	16:30:00	1075	□	1.695	33.1	13.1
160	16:31:00	755	~11	2.066	33.4	13.1
160	16:31:10	753	□	1.666	33.2	12.6
160	16:31:20	758	□	1.111	33.1	12.8
160	16:31:35	750	□	1.039	33.2	12.9
160	16:31:45	747	□	1.118	33.1	13.0

Appendix B.

Calculation of Velocity Exiting Vertical Tube

In order to derive the flow rates and kinetic power exiting the upwelling tubes, we utilized the following logic. The points referred to in the following discussion are indicated on Figure B-1. Since there was a continuous tube from Point 1 to Point 3, their salinity and flow rates are identical. Since the only inlets to the vertical tube are from Point 3 and Point 4, the flow rate at Point 2 equals the sum of the flow rates from Point 3 and Point 4.

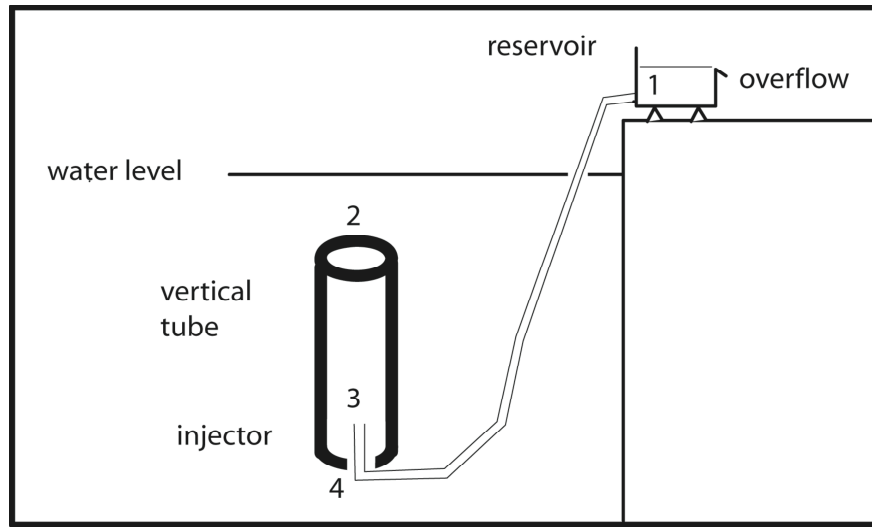


Figure B-1. Diagram of the test configuration.

The equation for the flow rate Point 4 is derived from:

If:

$$Q_i = \text{Volumetric flow rate at point } i$$

$$= W_T / \rho \text{ per second} \quad (1)$$

$$S_i = \text{Salinity at point } i$$

$$= (W_S / W_T) \quad (2)$$

$$W_S = \text{Weight of Salt in a Solution}$$

$$W_T = \text{Total Weight of Solution}$$

Then:

$$S_2 = W_{S2} / W_{T2} \quad (3)$$

And since the flow past Point 2 comes from either Point 3 or Point 4:

$$S_2 = (W_{S3} + W_{S4}) / (W_{T3} + W_{T4}) \quad (4)$$

Substituting in:

$$W_S = S W_T \quad (5)$$

Results in:

$$S_2 = (S_3 W_{T3} + S_4 W_{T4}) / (W_{T3} + W_{T4}) \quad (6)$$

Substituting in:

$$W_T = Q \rho \text{ seconds} \quad (7)$$

Results in:

$$S_2 = (S_3 Q_3 \rho_3 + S_4 Q_4 \rho_4) / (Q_3 \rho_3 + Q_4 \rho_4) \quad (8)$$

Which gives an equation that has one unknown variable (Q4).

$$Q_4 = Q_3 (\rho_3 / \rho_4) (S_2 - S_3) / (S_4 - S_2) \quad (9)$$

It can be assumed, within the accuracy of this experiment, that:

$$S_3 = 0 \quad (10)$$

and

$$\rho_3 = \rho_4 \quad (11)$$

Which leaves:

$$Q_4 = Q_3 S_2 / (S_4 - S_2) \quad (12)$$

The power values are derived from:

If:

$$\begin{aligned} A &= \text{Cross Sectional Area} \\ &= \pi d^2 / 4 \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

$$d = \text{Tube Diameter}$$

$$M_q = \text{Mass Flow}$$

$$= \rho \times Q \quad (14)$$

$$\rho = 1 + (S_i / 1000) \quad (15)$$

$$v = \text{Fluid Velocity}$$

$$= Q / A \quad (16)$$

Then:

$$\begin{aligned} P_k &= \text{Power from Kinetic Energy} \\ &= 0.5 M_q v^2 \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

$$= 0.5 (\rho Q) (16 Q^2 / \pi^2 d^4) \quad (18)$$

$$= 8 Q^3 \rho / \pi^2 d^4 \quad (19)$$