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APPLICATION FOR A STANDARD PATENT

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hereby applies for the grant of a standard patent for an invention entitled

Process for separating in seawater

which is described in the accompanying complete specification.

Details of basic application(s):

Basic Application: Country:
1-40092 JAPAN

Date:
20 February 1989

The address for service is:

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DATED this TWENTIETH day of FEBRUARY 1990

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By Its Patent Attorneys
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TO:
The Commissioner of Patents
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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NOTICE OF ENTITLEMENT

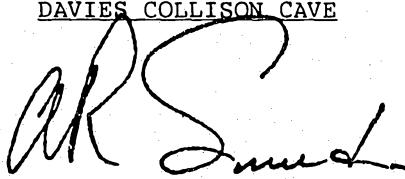
ATUSHI NASU, the applicant in respect of Application No. 49980/90 state the following:-

The Nominated Person is the inventor.

The Applicant/Nominated Person is entitled to claim priority from the application listed on the patent request form because the Applicant/Nominated Person made the application and because that application was the first application made in a Convention country in respect of the invention.

DATED this 3rd day of December, 1991.

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SEPARATING SALTS IN SEAWATER

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(56) Prior Art Documents
US 3262865

(57) Claim

1. A process for separating metal salts from seawater comprising:

(a) adding an acid containing sulphate and phosphate ions to the seawater in amount sufficient to lower the pH of the seawater to 2.0 or less;

(b) adding an alkaline agent to the seawater with lowered pH in an amount sufficient to raise the pH of the seawater to 13 or more, thereby forming a first precipitate of metal salts;

(c) separating said first precipitate from the seawater and collecting the remaining seawater as a first solution;

(d) concentrating and cooling said first solution to form a second precipitate and recovering the remaining solution as a second solution; and

(e) evaporating said second solution to dryness thereby forming a residue of metal salts.

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COMPLETE SPECIFICATION

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Application Number:

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Complete specification for the invention entitled

"Process for separating in seawater".

The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it known to me:-

PROCESS FOR SEPARATING SALTS IN SEAWATER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a process for separating salts in seawater which contains useful metal ions.

2. Related Art Statement

It is well known that there are many chemical elements such as Na, Cl, various metals and halogens in seawater. But only a few elements such as Na, Cl, Mg, Br are obtained from seawater as a mineral source heretofore.

Raw salts are obtained from seawater by evaporation and used for many purposes. But excessive energy is necessary in the evaporation because it requires the phase-change of water. Further, the raw salts have to be purified or prepared for each purpose. In addition to evaporation, reverse-osmosis is carried out for desalinization of seawater. The reverse-osmosis is carried out by using an expensive large scale apparatus such as a high pressure pump or reverse-osmosis modules. Moreover these processes of desalinization of seawater don't seek to utilize the available elements from seawater but only to desalt seawater.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The drawbacks of the prior art as described above have been successfully overcome by the present invention.

In one broad form the present invention is a process for separating metal salts from seawater comprising:

(a) adding an acid containing sulphate and phosphate ions to the seawater in amount sufficient to lower the pH of the seawater to 2.0 or less;

(b) adding an alkaline agent to the seawater with lowered pH in an amount sufficient to raise the pH of the seawater to 13 or more, thereby forming a first precipitate of metal salts;

(c) separating said first precipitate from the seawater and collecting the remaining seawater as a first solution;

(d) concentrating and cooling said first solution to



form a second precipitate and recovering the remaining solution as a second solution; and

(e) evaporating said second solution to dryness thereby forming a residue of metal salts.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

First, a strong acid containing sulphate ion is added to seawater to obtain a low pH. Here a dilute solution of several % sulfuric acid can be used as the strong acid containing sulphate ion. An acidic solution obtained by adding 3-5% of sulfuric acid to an aqueous solution of activated calcium phosphate and removing a precipitate therefrom (P-S acid) is preferably used. The P-S acid is a strong acid having a pH of about 0.2, but this acid is very mild to human skin and easily treated, in contrast with sulfuric acid. In the course of 2-3 hours after adding the diluted sulfuric acid or the P-S acid to seawater, the pH of the seawater is adjusted to a low pH not more than 2. A precipitate, only a very small amount of which is deposited is removed by filtration together with other materials suspended in the seawater.

Next, a strongly alkaline agent is added to the pH adjusted seawater to neutralize and to adjust to a high pH. By adding a strongly alkaline agent to the seawater, salts such as sulphates of alkali earth metals, and other metals the solubility of which decrease in a high pH, precipitate. Sodium hydroxide (solid) or a aqueous solution containing both calcium oxide and sodium hydroxide (Ca-Na solution) or the like is used as the strongly alkaline agent. The strongly alkaline agent is used in an amount sufficient to provide a pH of 13 or more. Usually sodium hydroxide (solid) is used in an amount about 3% of the seawater and Ca-Na solution is used in an amount about 5% of the seawater. In the course of several hours after adding the alkali, the seawater will have a pH 13 or above and a precipitate (a) is formed.

The precipitate (a) contains Ca, K, Mg and a significant amount of Al, B, Fe, Zn, etc. by elemental analysis of the wet precipitate. As shown in table 1, Mg,



Al, B, Fe, Zn increased significantly by this separation compared to the amounts of these elements in natural seawater.

Accordingly, the precipitate (a) can be utilized as a source of these metals and itself has many uses as an alkaline agent including use as a source of metal ions.

On the other hand, the seawater after removing the precipitate (a) contains mainly Cl ion as an anion. This remaining seawater can be used for a combustion aids utilizing seawater, which the applicant of this invention developed (Japanese Laid-open Patent Publication No. 63-225695).

Moreover in the second step the remaining seawater is further treated to form a precipitate (b) and remaining solution (c) by concentrating the remaining seawater and cooling it.

In this second separation step, the remaining seawater is concentrated to 10%-30% of its original volume, preferably 10%-15% and then cooled. By cooling, white a crystalline precipitate (b) starts to separate immediately.

The salts contained in (b) include, as main components, Na, Mg, Ca and a significant amount of Si. The salts (b) can be utilized as a source of Si and an aqueous solution of the salts may be utilized for food additives or another purpose. It has been reported that silicone prompts absorption of calcium or magnesium in the human body. Accordingly, the food additives utilizing the salts (b) have the benefits of not only improvement of the taste of foods or drinks but also high nutrition. Moreover, it has been verified that foods containing salts (b) have a high antibacterial activity.

Remaining seawater (c), after removing the salts (b), contains Na, and K as main components and Ca, Si and Li as minor components. This remaining seawater (c) has high pH (more than 14) and may be used for any purpose as an alkaline agent instead of NaOH or the like. For example, it is used for neutralization of acidic waste oils or acidic sewage from a paper plant. It is also used for separating oil components from a mixture of petroleum and seawater



present around the engine of a ship.

Moreover, this alkaline solution (c) may be utilized as a solvent for paints such as an epoxy paint or an acrylic paint, which have heretofore been dissolved in toluene or lacquer-thinner.

The white residue is obtained by evaporation. This process is carried out under reduced pressure if necessary. The residue is estimated to be salts, oxides or hydroxides of K, Na, and Ca etc. based on elemental analysis. A container of high resistance to alkali should be used for evaporating water from the solution by heating.

According to the present invention, elements available in seawater are collected in solid state by only adjusting the pH of seawater stepwise and the components of the solids obtained in each step have characteristics to be utilized for various purposes after appropriate treatment or as it is.

EXAMPLE

1. Preparation of P-S acid

An aqueous solution (1) having a pH value of over than 13 was obtained by adding 50g of a alkaline agent to 1 litre of water. The alkaline agent used herein was a powdery agent containing mainly calcium phosphate and calcium oxide obtained by baking bones. P-S acid having a pH of 0.2 was obtained by adding sulfuric acid to the solution (1) to make a 5% sulfuric acid solution.

2. Preparation of Ca-Na solution

An aqueous solution (2) having a pH value of over than 13 was obtained by dissolving 30g of a powdery alkaline agent in 1 litre of seawater. The powdery alkaline agent used herein was a powdery agent containing mainly calcium oxide obtained by firing limestones. A Ca-Na solution was prepared by dissolving 5% of NaOH (solid) in the solution (2).

3. Separation of salts in seawater (First step)

3 hours after adding 10 litre of aforementioned P-S acid to 500 litre of seawater, insoluble materials were



removed by filtration. By this treatment, the pH of the seawater became 1.6. Next, 25 liter of Ca-Na solution was added to 500 litre of the seawater of low pH. After standing for 10 hours, the precipitate thereby formed, was separated by filtration and sun-dried. As a result about 20kg of solid salts (a) were obtained. The pH of the remaining seawater was 9.1. Results of elemental-analysis of the solid salts (a) and the remaining seawater are listed in tables 1 & 2.

It is evident from the results that elements such as Mg, Al, Cu, Fe, Zn etc. were collected in the precipitate (a) from seawater.

4. Separation of salts in the remaining seawater (Second step)

10 litres of the remaining seawater obtained in the first step were concentrated to about 15% of the original volume by heating.

The concentrated seawater was cooled in a water bath. Then crystalline salts started to form immediately. These salts (b) were separated by filtration.

The dry weight of the salts (b) was 200g. Results of elemental-analysis of the salts (b) and the filtrate were listed on the table 3 & 4. As shown in table 3 & 4, the salts are Si-rich salts and the remaining solution contains few cations besides Na, K and Ca.

5. Examples of utilization

1. The remaining seawater after removing the precipitate (a) in first separation step was used for producing combustion aids which the applicant developed. These combustion aids were obtained by adding a strongly alkaline agent containing mainly calcium oxide to the aforementioned seawater, dissolving therein a mixture of oils, a strongly alkaline agent containing mainly calcium oxide and a little amount of water and removing insoluble materials therefrom. The combustion aids thus obtained were effective for reducing fuel costs and cleaning the exhaust gas when sprayed into internal combustion engines.



Further, clogging of fuel supply system was reduced excellently when these combustion aids were used, compared with the combustion aids prepared by using untreated seawater.

2. An ionic water for food or drinks was obtained by dissolving 5g of aforementioned salts (b) in 1 litre of water. Noodles which have a very good taste were made by kneading flour with the ionic water. The noodles did not putrify after storage at 8°C for 2 weeks.

TABLE 1

Elements	Precipitate (mg/l)	Seawater (mg/l)
Ca	590	401
K	390	380
Mg	4320	1300
Na	12200	10500
S	1310	900
Al	327	0.01
B	13.9	4.8
Cr	0.08	0.00005
Cu	0.02	0.0006
Fe	2.07	0.01
Mn	0.07	0.002
Si	6.4	3
Sr	4.7	8
Zn	13.7	0.001

TABLE 2

Remaining Seawater	Seawater (natural)
Cl(mg/l)	17200
K(mg/l)	350
Na(g/l)	11.5
Ca ² (mg/l)	300
Mg ² (mg/l)	250
	18980
	380
	10.556
	401
	1272



TABLE 3

Elements in salts (b) obtained in second step (mg/kg)					
Ca	2030	Al	33.5	Mn	1.39
K	4770	B	169	Si	697
Mg	6.10(%)	Cr	2.78	Sr	194
Na	33.7(%)	Cu	5.66	Zn	2.09
S	3.81(%)	Fe	17.8	Li	8.93

TABLE 4

Elements in filtrate obtained in second step (mg/kg)					
Ca	13.2	Al	-	Mn	-
K	3840	B	-	Si	2.32
Mg	Trace	Cr	-	Sr	0.04
Na	14.8(%)	Cu	-	Zn	-
S	7560	Fe	-	Li	2.92



The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A process for separating metal salts from seawater comprising:
 - (a) adding an acid containing sulphate and phosphate ions to the seawater in amount sufficient to lower the pH of the seawater to 2.0 or less;
 - (b) adding an alkaline agent to the seawater with lowered pH in an amount sufficient to raise the pH of the seawater to 13 or more, thereby forming a first precipitate of metal salts;
 - (c) separating said first precipitate from the seawater and collecting the remaining seawater as a first solution;
 - (d) concentrating and cooling said first solution to form a second precipitate and recovering the remaining solution as a second solution; and
 - (e) evaporating said second solution to dryness thereby forming a residue of metal salts.
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein a precipitate forms in step (a) and further comprising separating from the seawater the precipitate formed in step (a) and feeding the remaining seawater to step (b).
3. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein said alkaline agent is NaOH.
4. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein said alkaline agent is an aqueous solution of calcium oxide and sodium hydroxide.
5. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein, in step (d), said first solution is concentrated to 10-30% of the volume collected in step (c).
6. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein, in step (d), said first solution is concentrated to 10-15% of the volume collected in step (c).
7. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
 1. said first precipitate salts of Ca, K, Mg, Al, B, Fe and Zn;
 2. said second precipitate contains salts of Na, Mg, K, Ca and Si; and



said residue contains salts, oxides of hydroxides of K, Na and ca.

8. A process for separating metal salts from seawater as substantially herein described and with reference to any one of the examples.

DATED this 3rd day of December, 1991.

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