U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
March 3, 1849

Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations of the United States Geological Survey

Chapter A9

MEASUREMENT OF TIME OF TRAVEL IN STREAMS BY DYE TRACING

By F.A. Kilpatrick and J.F. Wilson, Jr.

This manual is a revision of "Measurement of Time of Travel and Dispersion in Streams by Dye Tracing," by E.F. Hubbard, F.A. Kilpatrick, L.A. Martens, and J.F. Wilson, Jr., Book 3, Chapter A9, published in 1982.

Book 3

APPLICATIONS OF HYDRAULICS

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MANUEL LUJAN, Jr., ***Secretary***

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Dallas L. Peck, ***Director***

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1989

For sale by the Books and Open-File Reports Section, U.S. Geological Survey,
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PREFACE

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The unit of publication, the chapter, is limited to a narrow field of subject matter. This format permits flexibility in revision and publication as the need arises. Chapter A9 deals with the application of dye tracers for the measurement of time of travel in streams.

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TWI 8-B2.	Calibration and maintenance of vertical-axis type current meters, by G.F. Smoot and C.E. Novak. 1968. 15 pages.

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METRIC CONVERSION FACTORS

For readers who wish to convert measurements from the inch-pound system of units to the metric system of units, the conversion factors are listed below.

Multiply inch-pound unit	*By*	*To obtain metric unit*
foot (ft)	0.3048	meter (m)
mile (mi)	1.609	kilometer (km)
gallon (gal)	3.785	liter (L)
square foot (ft^2)	0.0929	square meter (m^2)
square mile (mi^2)	2.589	square kilometer (km^2)
cubic foot (ft^3)	0.02832	cubic meter (m^3)
foot per second (ft/s)	0.3048	meter per second (m/s)
square foot per second (ft^2/s)	0.0929	square meter per second (m^2/s)
cubic foot per second (ft^3/s)	0.02832	cubic meter per second (m^3/s)
mile per hour (mi/h)	0.4470	meter per second (m/s)

Note: Micrograms per liter (μg/L) is approximately equal to parts per billion (ppb) in any like units of weight per weight.

SYMBOLS AND UNITS

Symbol	*Explanation*	*Unit*
B	Average width of stream	ft
C	Concentration	μg/L
C_p	Observed peak dye concentration	μg/L
d	Mean depth of stream	ft
E_z	Lateral or transverse mixing coefficient	ft^2/s
K	Mixing length coefficient	ft^2
L	Length of measurement reach	mi
L_o	Channel length required for optimum mixing; usually corresponds to about 95-percent mixing	ft
Q	Total stream discharge	ft^3/s
Q_m	Maximum discharge in test reach	ft^3/s
s	Water-surface slope	ft/ft
t	Time	h
t_b	Interval of time for dye concentrations to build up from the leading edge to the peak	h
$t_{c,L,t,p}$	Traveltime of centroid, leading edge, trailing edge, and peak, respectively, of dye-response curve	h
$T_{c,L,t,p}$	Elapsed time to centroid, leading edge, trailing edge, and peak, respectively, of dye-response curve	h or min
T_d	Duration in time for tracer cloud to pass any one point in a section	h or min
T_D	Duration in time for entire tracer cloud to pass a section	h or min
T_{D10}	Duration of abbreviated time-concentration curve to time when C=10 percent C_p	h
V_s	Volume of stock dye solution	L or mL
v	Mean stream velocity	ft/s or mi/h
v_p	Velocity of peak	ft/s or mi/h

MEASUREMENT OF TIME OF TRAVEL IN STREAMS BY DYE TRACING

By F.A. Kilpatrick and J.F. Wilson, Jr.

Abstract

The use of fluorescent dyes and tracing techniques provides a means of measuring the time of travel of solutes in steady and gradually varied flow in streams. This information is needed in waste transport studies, in particular to evaluate the behavior of soluble substances accidentally spilled in streams.

This manual describes methods of measuring time of travel of water and waterborne solutes by dye tracing. The fluorescent dyes, measuring equipment used, and field and laboratory procedures are also described. Methods of analysis and presentation to illustrate time of travel of streams are provided.

Introduction

General

Time of travel refers to the movement of water or waterborne solutes from point to point in a stream during steady or gradually varied flow conditions. The measurement or simulation of time of travel using dye tracers involves the slug injection of a dye at some location along the stream and the measurement of the resulting response, or dye cloud, at other locations downstream (Buchanan, 1964; Wilson, 1967). When a fluorescent dye is used as a tracer, the degree of fluorescence can be determined with a fluorometer. The concentration of dye in the sample is directly proportional to its fluorescence. A plot of concentration against time defines the dye-response curve at each sampling site. Time of travel is measured by observing the time required for movement of the dye cloud, as defined by the response curve, between sampling sites. Equally important, the dispersion characteristics of the stream can also be determined.

The purpose of this manual is to describe methods, procedures, dyes, and equipment used in planning and making time-of-travel measurements in streams and in analyzing and presenting such data.

It is assumed that the reader is familiar with "Fluorometric Procedures for Dye Tracing," by Wilson and others (1986), which describes the general procedures for using and measuring dyes.

Purposes of tracer studies

As described in this manual, dye studies in streams usually are conducted to provide data for two purposes: to determine time of travel for use in water-quality models; and to define relations so that those charged with public safety, or others having interest in transient water-quality problems, can predict the time of arrival and passage time of a noxious substance released or spilled upstream.

Water-quality models are, typically, no better quantitatively than the travel time data used in their formation. Traveltimes estimated from low-flow discharge measurements from a few cross sections in a reach may be subject to large error. Thus, an accurate measurement of time of travel, such as can be made using dye tracers, is needed.

Newspaper headlines frequently report spills of hazardous materials into streams: a truck goes into a river; a barge sinks or starts leaking; a holding tank at a riverside facility ruptures; an industrial plant accidentally releases a dangerous substance into its normal effluent; or a pipeline ruptures near a river. Public-health officials often need to decide whether, when, and how long to suspend operations of public water-supply intakes in the reach downstream from the spill. Likewise, other users of the water need to decide on an appropriate course of action. On one hand, suspension of water use may result in economic penalties and, if it involves a public water supply, may cause widespread discomfort. On the other hand, public-health officials cannot afford to take risks when the safety of large numbers of people is involved. Clearly, accurate time-of-travel and dispersion informa- mation is needed, in advance of the spill, to provide a reasonable basis for such decisions.

Manuscript approved for publication June 29, 1988.

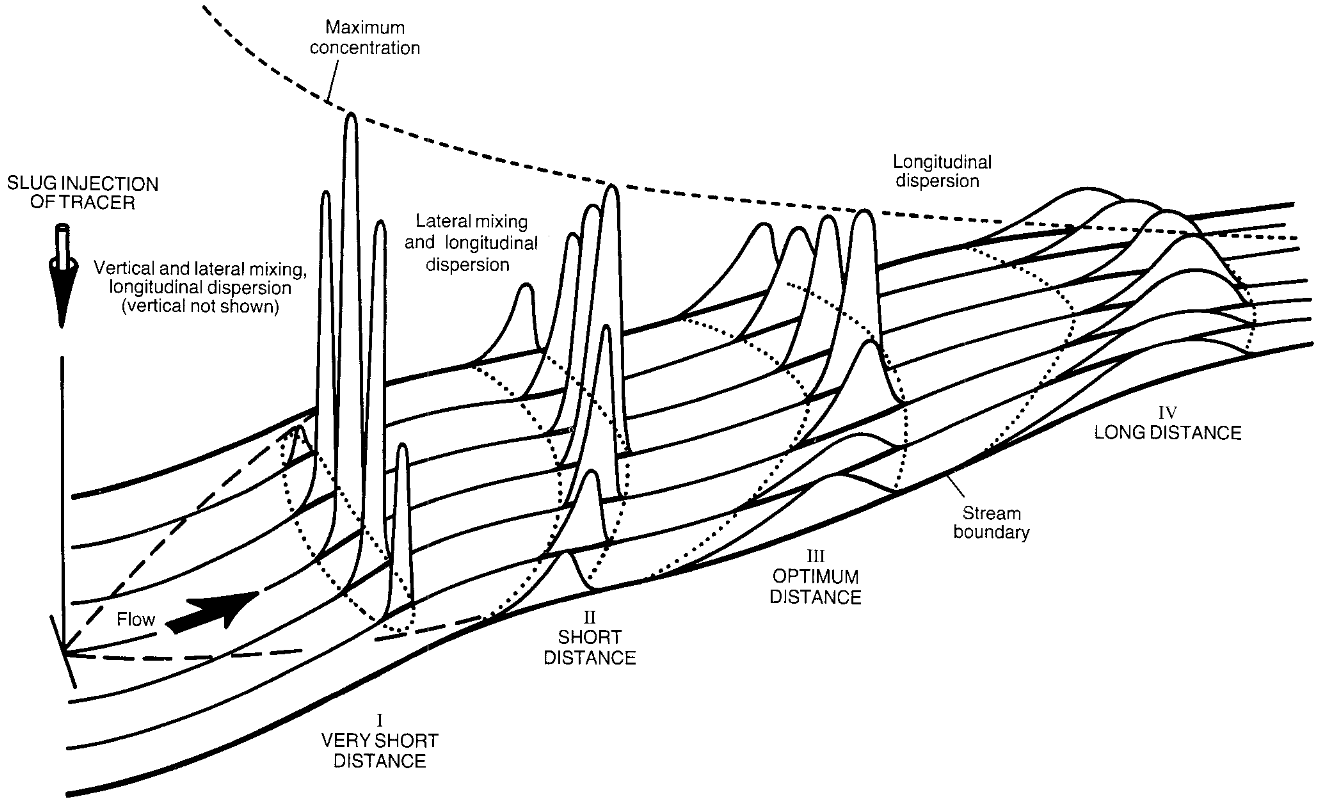


Figure 1.—Lateral mixing and longitudinal dispersion patterns and changes in distribution of concentration downstream from a single, center slug injection of tracer.

Stewart (1967) made such a study on short notice when a chlorine barge sank in the Mississippi River near Baton Rouge, La., causing officials to fear that the substance would leak into the river. Perhaps spurred by this incident, the Louisiana Department of Public Works has acquired, through its cooperative program with the U.S. Geological Survey, an extensive set of data on time of travel and dispersion on streams in the State (Shindel and others, 1977; Calandro, 1978).

Press releases

Because of increasing public awareness of stream pollution, it is highly desirable to provide press releases that describe dye tests in advance. A press release should emphasize the purpose of the test, for example, "to provide a means of predicting the movement of any harmful substances that might be spilled" or "to provide a means of understanding and monitoring the water quality of the stream." The press release should state that the dye is harmless; however, this should not be the main theme, and titles such as "Harmless red dye to be dumped into _____ River" should be avoided. The title should emphasize the *positive* aspects of the test, for example, "State and U.S. Geological Survey hydrologists to study transport characteristics of _____ River by use of dye tracers."

General Description of Dye Tracing

Theory

Dyes injected into a stream behave in the same manner as the water particles themselves. A measure of the movement of the tracer will in effect be a measure of the movement of an element of fluid in the stream and of its dispersion characteristics.

The dispersion and mixing of the tracer in the receiving stream takes place in all three dimensions of the channel (fig. 1). Vertical mixing is normally completed first, and lateral mixing later, depending on stream characteristics and velocity variations. Longitudinal dispersion, having no boundaries, continues indefinitely and is the dispersion component of primary interest.

In figure 1, the responses to a slug injection of tracer are shown *with distance* downstream along

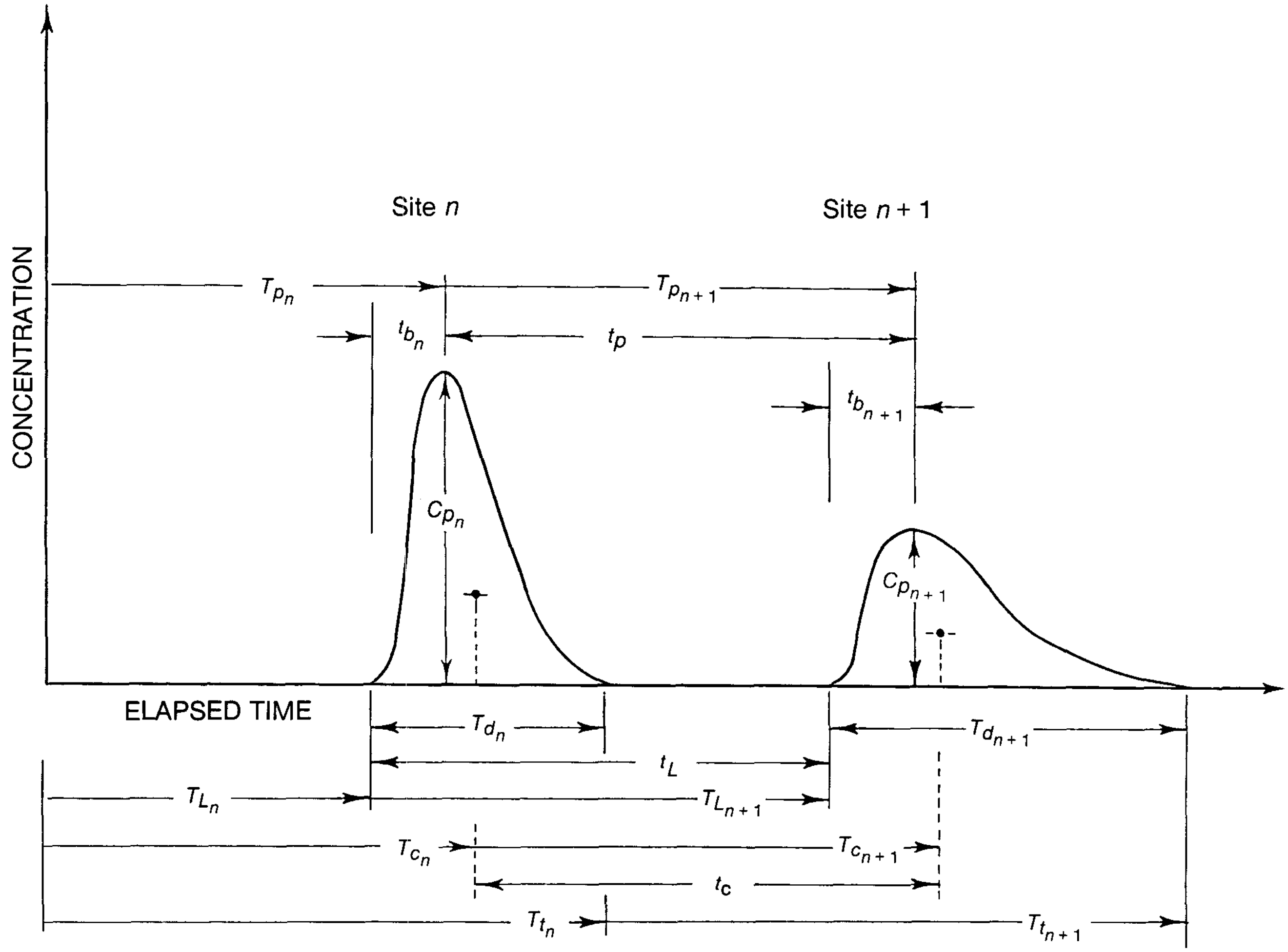


Figure 2.—Definition sketch of time-concentration curves along a selected streamline resulting from an instantaneous dye injection. (Abbreviations explained in section "Symbols and Units.")

selected imaginary streamlines. The response curve at any point downstream from an instantaneous dye injection is normally represented by plotting concentration against elapsed time (fig. 2). The time-concentration curves, or response curves, defined by the analysis of water samples taken at selected time intervals during the dye-cloud passage is the basis for determining time-of-travel and dispersion characteristics of streams.

The characteristics of the time-concentration curves *along a streamline* are shown in figure 2 and may be described in terms of elapsed time after an instantaneous dye injection. Characteristics pertinent to time-of-travel measurements are

T_L, elapsed time to the arrival of the leading edge of the response curve *at a sampling point*;

T_p, elapsed time to the peak concentration, C_p, of the response curve *at a point*;

T_c, elapsed time to the centroid of the response curve *at a point*; and

T_t, elapsed time to the trailing edge of the response curve *at a point*.

The mean traveltime for the flow along a streamline is the difference in elapsed time of the centroids of the time-concentration curves defined upstream and downstream *on the same streamline*:

$$t_c = T_{c(n+1)} - T_{c_n},$$

where n is the number of the sampling site.

Similarly, the traveltimes of the leading edge, peak concentration, and trailing edge *along a given streamline* are, respectively,

$$t_L = T_{L(n+1)} - T_{L_n}, \tag{1}$$

$$t_p = T_{p(n+1)} - T_{p_n}, \tag{2}$$

and

$$t_t = T_{t(n+1)} - T_{t_n}. \tag{3}$$

The time, T_d, necessary for the response to pass *a sampling point* in a section is

$$T_d = T_{t_n} - T_{L_n}. \quad (4)$$

As shown in figure 1, a typical dye cloud may travel faster in the center of the stream than along the banks, where it may also be more elongated. Complete definition of the response to a slug injection therefore may involve measurement at more than one point or streamline in the several sections involved. Fortunately, most time-of-travel measurements are made over long stream lengths, and elaborate measurement of the response curves laterally is not necessary. The exception is the measuring section nearest the injection point, where sampling at several points laterally is often advisable if the distance from the injection to this first section is short. Thus, in some uses the various times characterizing the response curves described above may best be averaged to represent the entire dye cloud at a section.

The duration or time of passage of a tracer response *at a section*, T_D, is the difference between the slowest trailing time along one bank and the fastest leading edge time, usually as observed in the center. The difference between the values of T_d and T_D can be significant. Unless otherwise indicated, further reference to the duration of the response curve will be to T_D, as in most time-of-travel studies $T_D \approx T_d$ for the long stream lengths involved.

Fluorometry

Fluorometers measure the luminescence of a fluorescent substance when the substance is subjected to a light source of a given wavelength. The higher the concentration of the fluorescent substance, the more emitted light the fluorometer will detect. The use of fluorometers in dye tracing has been described in detail by Wilson and others (1986).

Fluorescent dyes

Several dyes can be used as tracers in time-of-travel measurements. The basic characteristics of dyes now being used by the Geological Survey have been discussed by Wilson and others (1986). Properties to be considered in selecting a tracer include detectability, toxicity, solubility, cost, and sorption characteristics. Currently, rhodamine WT dye is the tracer recommended and the one involved in subsequent discussions.

Toxicity

Abidi (1982) reported on *laboratory* tests showing that when rhodamine WT dye is mixed with streamwater containing nitrites, diethylnitrosamine (DENA), a carcinogen, may be formed. Johnson and Steinheimer (1984) and Steinheimer and Johnson (1986) conducted a number of tests relative to DENA formation and persistence. They found that DENA in a simulated stream environment has a half-life of less than 3 hours. They also analyzed water samples from four streams taken during rhodamine WT tracer studies and could not detect DENA in any of the samples. Nitrite concentrations in the four streams varied from 2 to 46 micrograms per liter (μg/L).

Regrettably, Abidi's report influenced some agencies to suspend time-of-travel and related studies. Johnson and Steinheimer's reports need to be cited to emphasize that studies can be performed without harm if carefully performed. Similarly, it is important to adhere to the Geological Survey policy for the use of rhodamine dyes, which states that in a stream where *measured* nitrite is less than 50 μg/L, the maximum permissible concentration of the dye is 10 μg/L at any water intake that ultimately results in direct or indirect human consumption. Furthermore, should *measured* nitrite be greater than 50 μg/L, the maximum permissible concentration of rhodamine dye at an intake is 2 μg/L. Dye concentrations at water intakes can generally be kept well below this level; many dye studies are designed for maximum concentrations of 1 μg/L at such critical points as water intakes. Nitrite concentrations in excess of 50 μg/L seldom exist except with extreme river pollution.

In this regard, it is important to calibrate fluorometers with the dye used and to analyze samples so that the actual dye concentrations obtained in the stream are documented (Wilson and others, 1986). The test data and data on measured nitrite concentrations should be retained for any future legal needs, as well as for other types of analyses (Kilpatrick and Taylor, 1986).

Users of rhodamine WT dye need to take special precautions to avoid direct contact with the dye. Rubber or plastic gloves should be worn when handling concentrated dye solutions. When the dye does come in contact with the skin, it should be washed off immediately. Pipetting of dye solutions may be done with a squeeze bulb or by using a long piece of flexible tubing to prevent accidental ingestion of the dye.

Dye-Tracing Equipment and Supplies

Injection

Injections are usually made by pouring a measured amount of dye into the center of the flow. This is usually in the center of the stream. Graduated laboratory cylinders, as shown in figure 3, are recommended for measuring small quantities of dye. Large injections can be measured in terms of full dye containers; the net weight of dye is usually stamped on the container.

Injections at multiple points across the stream are sometimes used on wide or shallow streams to shorten the effective mixing length. The dye is measured, divided into a number of containers, and poured simultaneously at several points along the cross section. Special boat-mounted devices, such as those shown in figure 4, may be useful for line injections of very large doses. A line injection is made by pouring dye continuously while crossing the stream; in such instances, dye should not be injected at the immediate stream banks in dead water or in areas of slow-moving water. As a rule, dye should be injected in only about the central 75 percent of the flow.

Sampling

Grab sampling is most commonly used in dye-tracing studies. Sampling may be done by wading into the stream, from a boat, or by lowering the sampling container by rope from a bridge. The 8-dram (approximately 32 milliliters (mL) or 1 ounce (oz)) polyseal-cap glass bottles shown in figure 5 are stock items. This bottle has sufficient volume for six to eight analyses on some fluorometers, is easy to clean and handle, and is compatible with temperature-bath control systems. If the Turner Designs model 10 fluorometer is used, a 100-mL sample is desirable. This fluorometer may also be equipped with a smaller cuvette holder which allows the smaller 1-oz bottle to be used. Excessively large samples require a longer time to come to the desired temperature when temperature-control apparatus is used. Glass bottles can be numbered so that the sample data can be kept on separate data sheets referred to only by sample number (see fig. 6). Permanent numbers can be placed on the glass with a vibrator-etcher tool, or temporary numbers can be added by writing on masking or transparent tape affixed to the bottle. Soap or acid cleansing of bottles is not recommended; flushing and then rinsing *twice* in plain water is sufficient.

The chest shown in figure 5 contains six trays of 50 bottles each and is sufficient for most tests.

Standard samplers, such as depth-integrating water-quality samplers, can be used for point sampling, although smaller, lighter samplers designed specifically for the size and type of sample bottle are best. The sample bottle holder for the standard glass bottle shown in figure 5 is intended for use from bridges. It is fabricated by mounting a utility clamp or a split section of rubber hose to angle iron or to some other support, which serves to hold and protect the bottle.

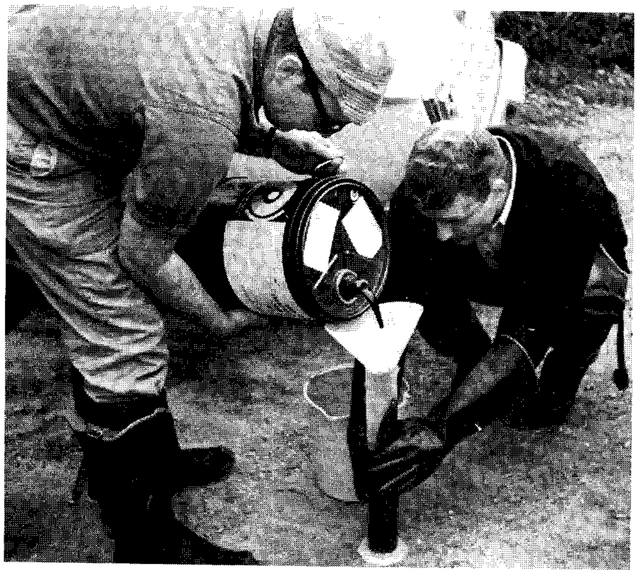


Figure 3.—Volumetric measuring of dye dosage in the field.

Hand sampling during dye studies is quite effective, but it frequently involves many people, and some of the sampling may need to be done during the night. Long hours with little relief is more the rule than the exception. Consequently, manpower costs are high. The automatic dye-sampling boat, shown in figure 7, has helped reduce the manpower required for dye studies (Kilpatrick, 1972). The sampler consists of a series of spring-activated 20-mL hypodermic syringes mounted vertically in a metal rack. When installed in the floating fiberglass boat, the tips of the syringes are immersed slightly in water. A worm gear, rotated by a small electric motor, advances a tripping mechanism, which releases the preset syringes one by one in sequence. As they are released, the syringes fill with water from the action of the spring that withdraws the plunger the necessary distance. Following use, the syringes need to be rinsed only with clear water; laboratory detergent will cause the syringes to stick during subsequent use. Bench-testing the timing mechanism to determine the sampling interval at various combinations of drive gears is recommended, as there may be some variation between units.

The use of dye-sampling boats can reduce the number of personnel required to do a fairly extensive dye study to just two. The first sampling site is usually sampled by hand because the dye passes quickly, and these data provide an opportunity to reestimate the

Figure 4.—Special boat-mounted apparatus for making a line injection of a large dosage of dye. (Photograph by Missouri district of U.S. Geological Survey.)

time of arrival of the dye cloud at downstream sampling points. Then the sampling boat is tied or anchored at the next sampling site and set to sample during a period of time that will ensure that the dye cloud is sampled when it passes. The frequency of sampling is set to obtain enough samples to define the dye cloud.

Although most investigators occasionally check the boats during the sampling process, they are typically left unattended for long periods to allow personnel time for meals and rest. There have been few reports of vandalism or theft. Some studies have been made with the sampler boats chained and locked to bridge pilings, but they are, of course, still subject to vandalism. Either way, the number of cases of vandalism and theft has been low nationwide.

It may be necessary to use two boats if the leading edge of the dye reaches a sampling site before the dye cloud has completely passed the next site upstream or if the dye cloud will pass two sites during the time set aside for the field crew to rest. When two sampling boats are used, they can be leapfrogged to alternate sites as the dye moves through the study reach.

In securing the boats by a bottom anchor in streams having swift velocities, enough anchor rope should be provided to prevent the boats from sinking. When tied at the front, where an eyebolt is installed for this purpose, the boats may be pulled under and sunk

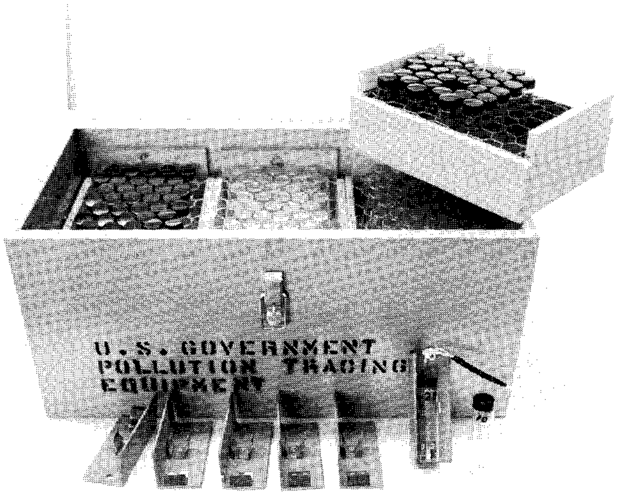


Figure 5.—Sampling equipment for use in dye-tracer studies.

because the front end, affected by the force of the anchor rope, tends to float a little lower than the rear.

Although periodic grab sampling, either manually or with the automatic sampler described, has proved satisfactory for most applications, continuous sampling and recording may be accomplished by use of a flow-through device on the fluorometer and a strip-chart recorder, such as that shown in figure 8. Typically, the intake hose is attached to a small electrically operated pump, which pumps the sample through the flow-through fluorometer door and out the discharge hose.

Continuous sampling from a boat is particularly applicable to studies in which the dye-cloud movement is multidimensional. Depth sampling can be accomplished by traversing vertically with the intake hose. High pump rates and short hose lengths will minimize lag errors and dispersion taking place in the hose itself.

The strip-chart record of fluorescense plotted against time can be calibrated by periodically collecting bottle samples from the fluorometer discharge line and noting the collection time directly on the chart. Subsequently, these samples are analyzed, and concentrations are plotted against chart readings to define a calibration curve, as shown in figure 9.

Fluorometers

Fluorometers and accessory equipment, and their calibration and operation, are described by Wilson and others (1986). A modern fluorometer, such as the Turner Designs model 10 (see fig. 10), is battery operated and enclosed for field as well as laboratory use. It should be noted that the standard 1-oz bottle described earlier and the 20-mL syringe sample obtained with the boat sampler require the 13- by 100-millimeter cuvette holder to permit analysis on this fluorometer.

Fluorometer readings for samples are relative values of fluorescence intensity and cannot be directly converted into dye concentrations unless the fluorometer is one of the newer models designed to be read directly in concentration values. The actual concentrations of the samples can be determined by use of a fluorometer that has been calibrated by using a set of standard solutions of known concentration. The standard dye solutions should be made from the same dye lot used in the field test. Thus, the concentrations in samples for all tests using the same lot of dye can readily be determined.

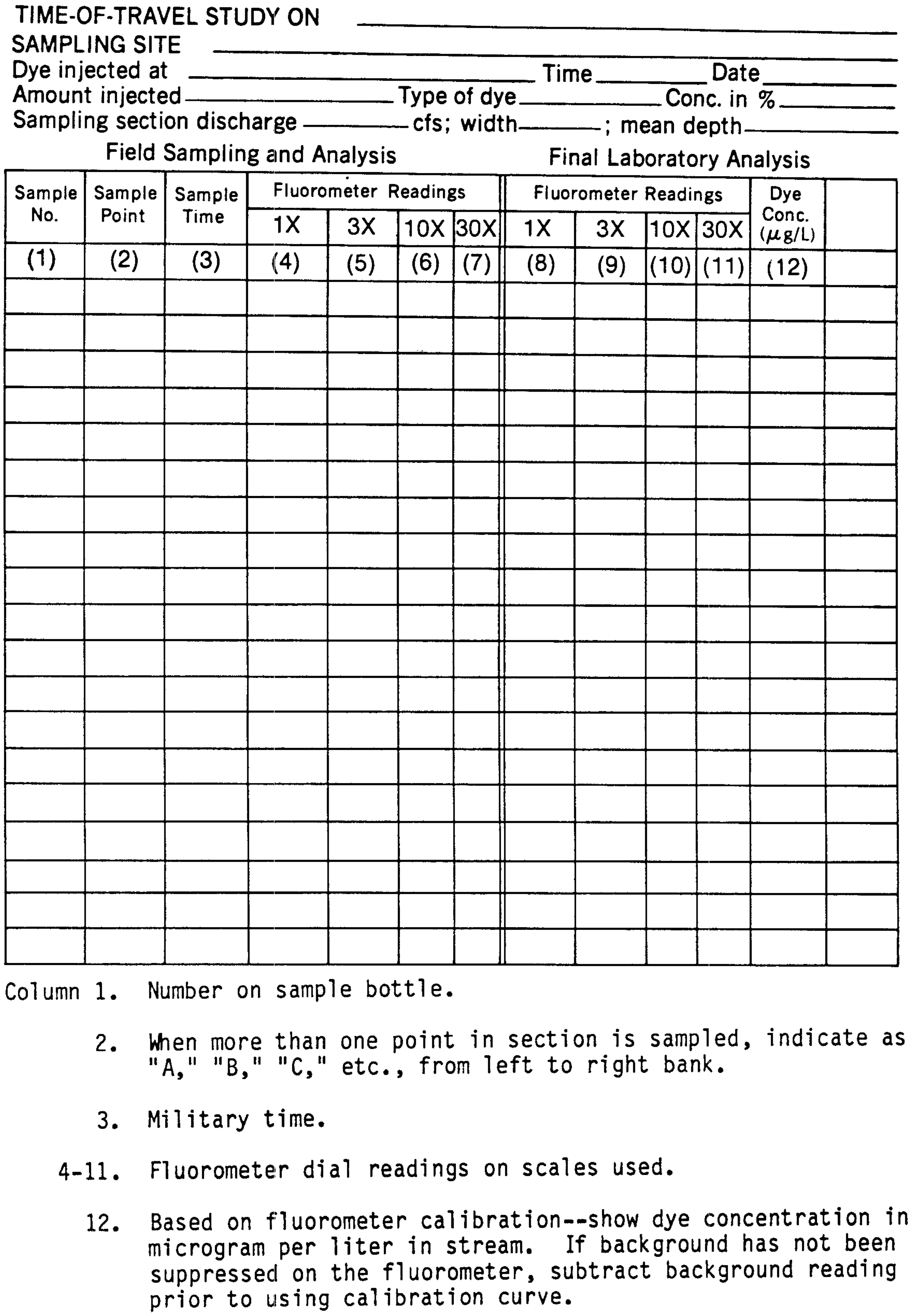
Planning the Time-of-Travel Study

Test discharges

Time of travel varies inversely with discharge in a stream. To develop a method for predicting traveltimes that can be used over a range of discharges, it is necessary to relate the time of travel in some way to stream discharge. Over a long reach of river, stream discharge generally increases in the downstream direction as the area drained increases. These increases, however, do not occur uniformly with distance along the river. At the points where tributaries enter the river, stream discharge increases abruptly. Depending on the drainage area of the tributary, these increases can be substantial. Usually, however, the river channel has adjusted to these increases in flow, and an increase in velocity commensurate with the increase in flow does not occur. For this reason, except for very limited studies, absolute discharge in the river is not an ideal variable for determining the relation between traveltime and discharge (Taylor and others, 1984).

Flow duration is an index of river discharge that is nearly constant throughout a reach of stream, provided there is no flood wave moving through the system. This characteristic makes flow duration a useful index of stream discharge in developing a relationship with time of travel. Flow duration, expressed in percent, is the percentage of time that the historic mean-daily discharges equal or exceed a specified discharge.

Figure 11 is a map of the Shenandoah River and its tributaries in Virginia and West Virginia where an



TIME-OF-TRAVEL STUDY ON ____________________________________

SAMPLING SITE ____

Dye injected at ________________________ Time ________ Date ________

Amount injected ______________ Type of dye __________ Conc. in % ________

Sampling section discharge _______ cfs; width ______; mean depth ________

Field Sampling and Analysis							Final Laboratory Analysis					
Sample No.	Sample Point	Sample Time	Fluorometer Readings				Fluorometer Readings				Dye Conc. (µg/L)	
			1X	3X	10X	30X	1X	3X	10X	30X		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	

Column 1. Number on sample bottle.

2. When more than one point in section is sampled, indicate as "A," "B," "C," etc., from left to right bank.

3. Military time.

4-11. Fluorometer dial readings on scales used.

12. Based on fluorometer calibration--show dye concentration in microgram per liter in stream. If background has not been suppressed on the fluorometer, subtract background reading prior to using calibration curve.

Figure 6.—Form for recording dye-sample data.

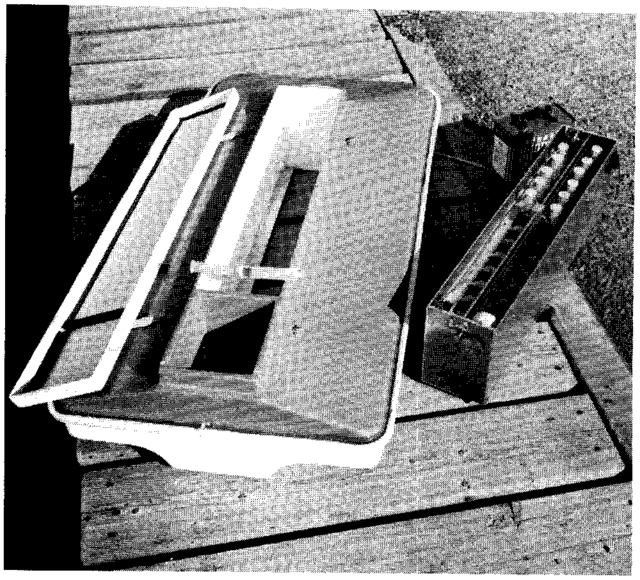


Figure 7.—Automatic dye-sampling boat, with the sampling mechanism and battery removed.

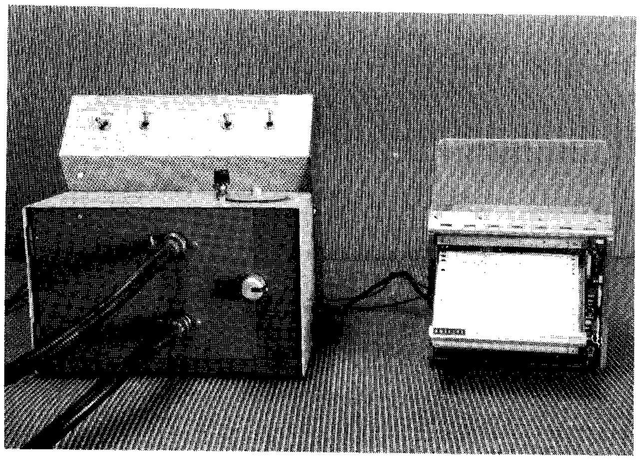


Figure 8.—Fluorometer equipped with a flow-through door and a strip-chart recorder for continuous sampling and recording.

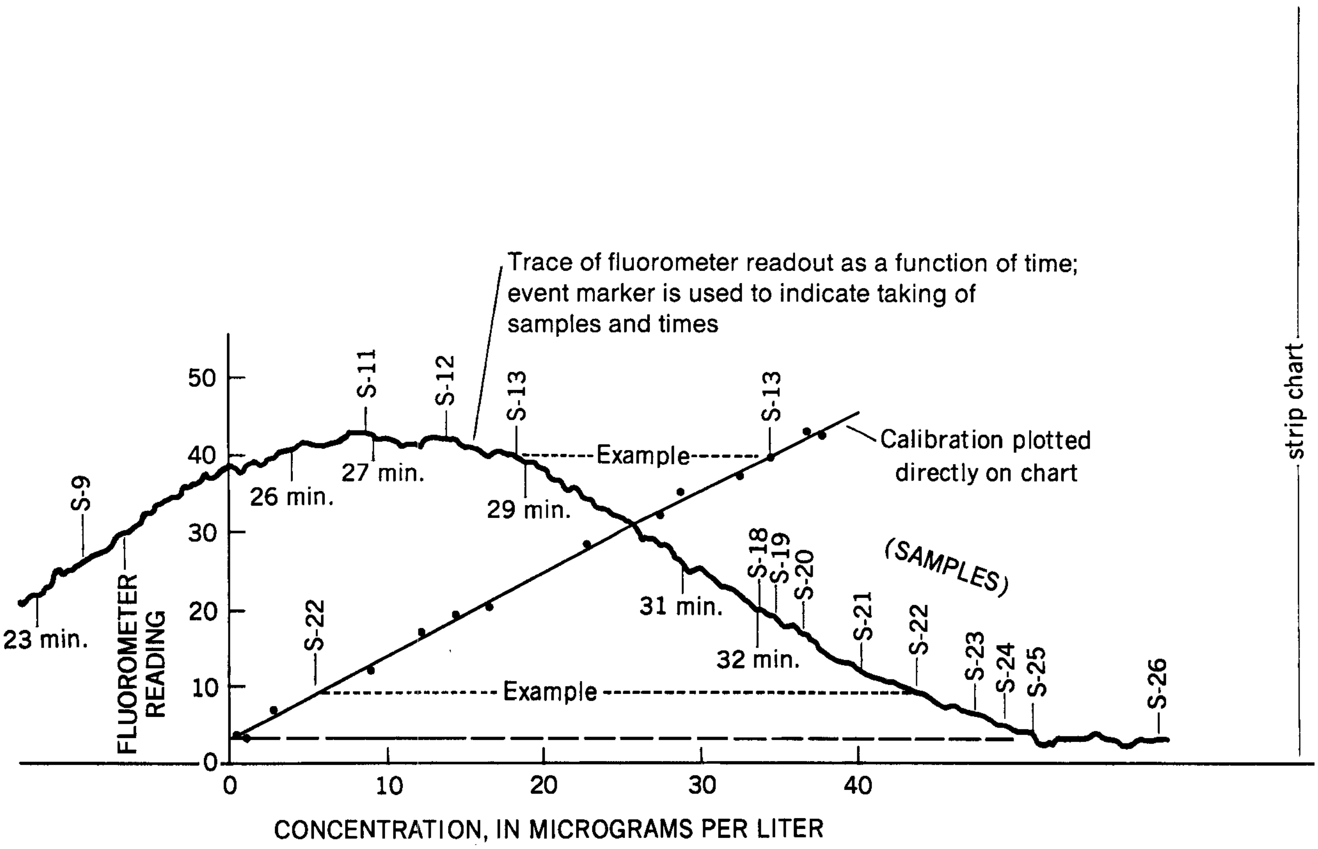


Figure 9.—Example of calibration of strip-chart trace. Selected samples from the fluorometer flow-through discharge are subsequently analyzed in the laboratory and concentrations are plotted against the strip-chart reading directly on the graph.

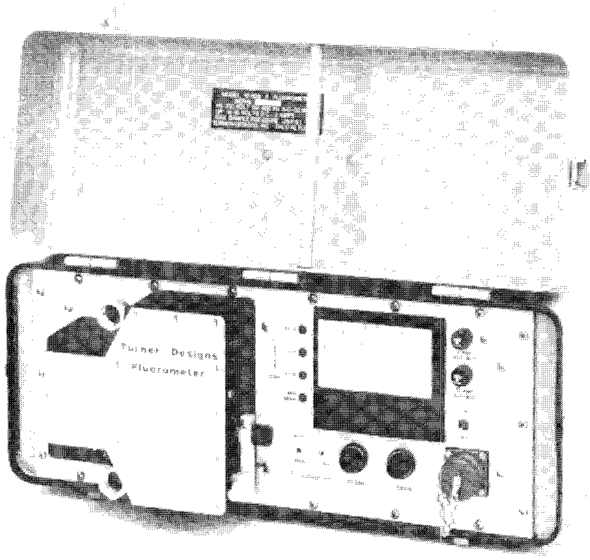


Figure 10.—A modern fluorometer, suitable for field use, having both flow-through and individual-sample analysis capability.

extensive series of time-of-travel tests was performed by Taylor and others (1986) during 1983 and 1984 at flows of 85 percent and 45 percent duration, respectively. The data and techniques used by Taylor and others are used selectively in this manual. Figure 12 shows the relation between flow duration and discharge for four gaging stations or locations on the South Fork Shenandoah River and its tributaries in Virginia. Taylor and others found that during September 1983 discharge on the Shenandoah River increased from 36 cubic feet per second (ft^3/s) at Waynesboro to 570 ft^3/s at Harpers Ferry, although flow duration was at approximately 85 percent throughout the reach. This information made possible comparisons with tests on the Potomac River, which were performed during the fall of 1981 at the flow duration of 90 percent; flow at this duration was 1,800 ft^3/s for the Potomac River at Washington, D.C. As mentioned previously, time of travel commonly varies inversely with discharge. The relation of time of travel to discharge is of the form

$$t=kQ^{-x}, \tag{5}$$

which is a straight line, logarithmically. The constant, k, and the exponent, x, need to be defined for each flow-control condition of interest, that is, pool-and-riffle or channel control. Thus, two or more time-of-travel measurements are usually required for any stream reach.

The first step in planning the time-of-travel study is to study existing streamflow records and to select the one or more flow durations to be sought for the tests. The lower flow (higher flow duration) is usually the most important, as traveltimes are long and the transport and behavior of potential wastes are the most critical. Fall is the most likely season for sufficiently long periods of stable low flows in a large river system. Stable high flows, having flow durations between 40 and 50 percent, sometimes occur during late spring. In either case, careful planning means being alert and ready for the desired periods of stable flows. Manpower may have to be concentrated for intense efforts when the flow "window" for the tests materialize. Plans and logistics need to be ready for implementation when the time comes.

Map and streamflow-data study

The next step in planning the time-of-travel measurement is to make a tentative evaluation of the stream reaches under consideration in terms of hydraulic characteristics and of constraints on the use of dyes. Topographic maps and available streamflow data should be examined to make the initial selection of sites where dye will be injected and sampled. Maps are useful in developing a generalized picture of the stream-channel system in terms of channel geometry, discharge and slope variations, manmade impoundments and diversions, and accessibility of the sites.

Examination of available streamflow data, discharge measurements, and gaging-station records and comparisons of hydrographs assist in selecting sampling and injection sites.

Reconnaissance of the stream

The reconnaissance of the stream will depend on the scope of the measurements being planned and should include the following activities:

1. Inspect the proposed injection site or sites to determine flow conditions, type of dye injection to use, and accessibility for injecting the dye.
2. Inspect the proposed sampling sites (minimum of two per injection is desirable) to determine accessibility and suitability. Decide whether more than one sampling point in the cross section will be necessary and where the sampling points will be located. Measure or estimate the channel width and depth and the mean velocity of the stream reach to the extent possible.
3. Estimate stream velocities to aid in planning sampling schedules. When making a visual reconnaissance of the stream, there is a tendency to give too much weight to the higher velocities observed in riffles compared with the slower

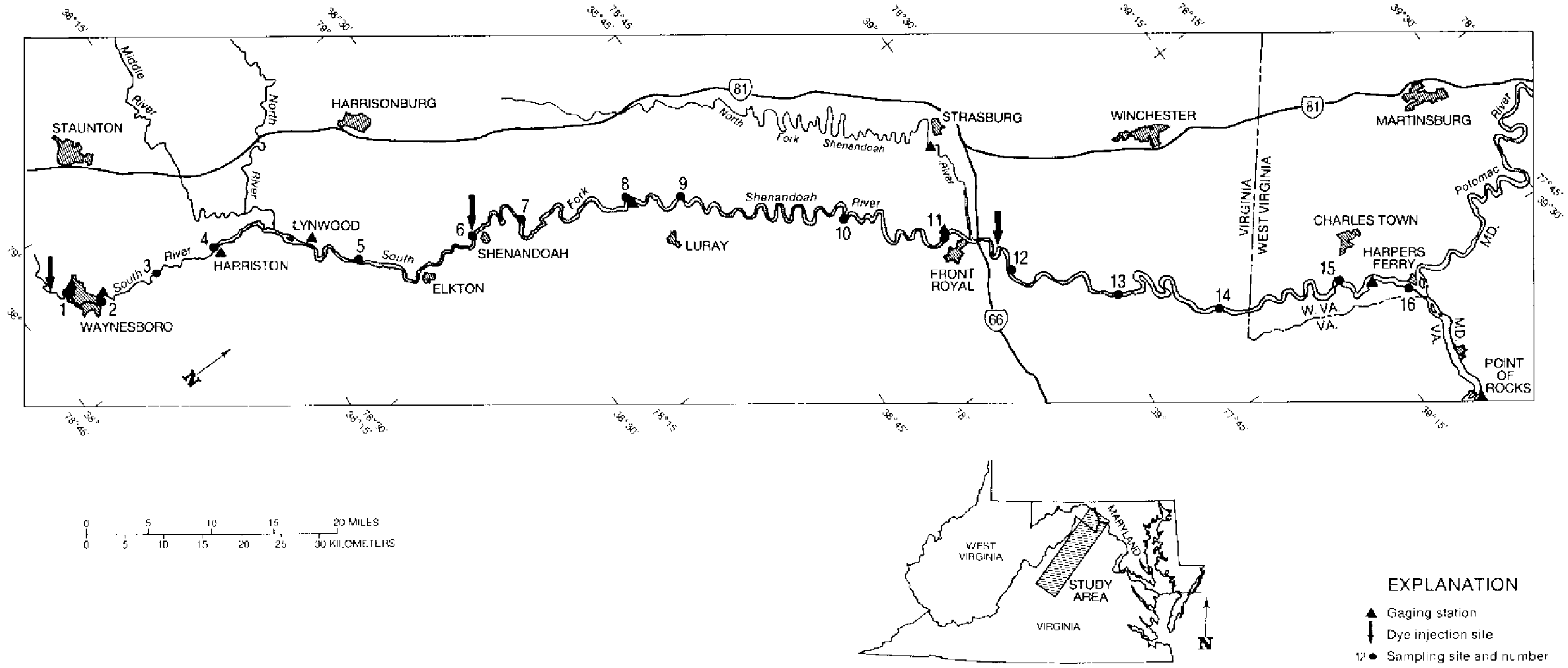


Figure 11.—Study reach for time-of-travel studies on the South Fork Shenandoah River in Virginia and West Virginia (from Taylor and others, 1986).

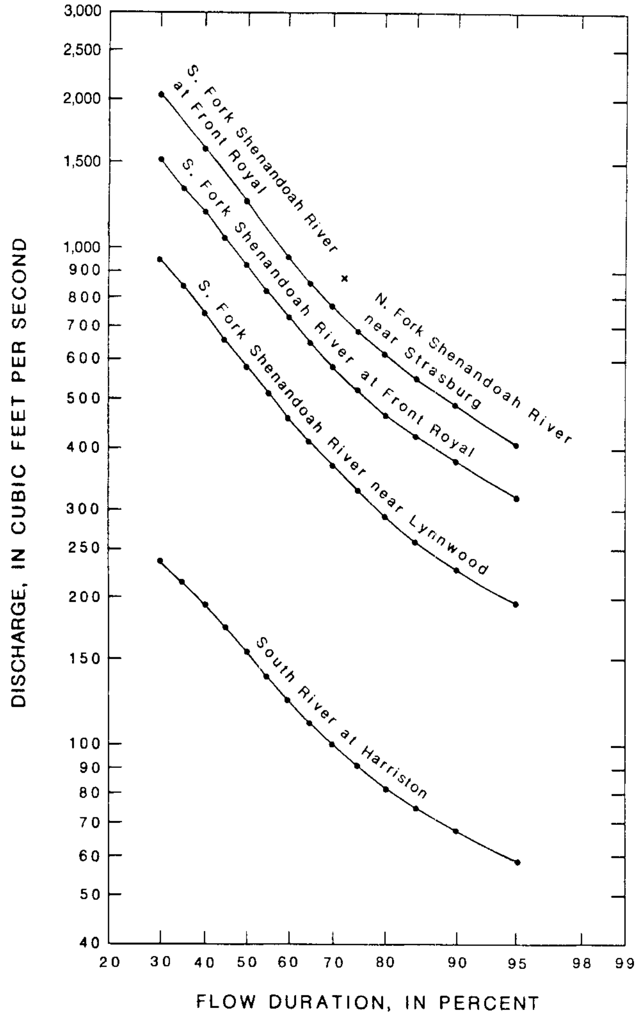


Figure 12.—Relation between flow duration and discharge at index gaging stations on the South Fork Shenandoah River and its tributaries in Virginia and West Virginia (from Taylor and others, 1986).

velocities through the pools, which occupy a larger proportion of the stream. However, the use of conservative estimates, that is, higher velocities, to plan sampling schedules ensures measurement of the leading edge of the dye cloud.

At high flows when pools and riffles are drowned out, mean velocities determined from current-meter measurements commonly are in close agreement with the mean velocity of the dye cloud. It should be remembered that the leading edge travels at a velocity faster than the mean. A common mistake is to base the sampling schedule on average velocity, which results in arrival too late to sample the leading edge.

4. Inspect all river reaches for dams, diversion canals, water intakes, sewage outfalls, and any other condition that might affect the measurement or might be affected by the measurement. Where water supplies are withdrawn in the reach under investigation, estimate the mean velocity for the reach and the river discharge at the diversion point, in order to estimate the maximum dye concentration that may be anticipated. Obtain water samples for nitrite determination at any water withdrawal points. If dye concentrations at the withdrawal point are expected to exceed 10 μg/L, or if nitrite concentrations exceed 50 μg/L, less dye will have to be injected or the injection point changed. Frequently the location of a water-supply diversion is selected as the most distant sample point, and an injection for the next subreach is made just below this point. Because it is desirable to overlap subreaches, the water intake should be the next-to-last sampling site for one subreach, and the injection for the next subreach made immediately downstream from the intake.
5. Locate suitable discharge measuring sections at or near each injection and sampling site. Set reference points at the sites if it is desirable to establish stage-discharge relations at the site rather than measuring discharge during the passage of the dye.
6. Estimate the probable discharge at the last sampling section to compute the amount of dye needed. It should be kept in mind that the maximum discharge in the reach is that used in estimating the amount of dye needed.
7. Select a base of operations where shelter and power for the fluorometer are available. This could be the motel or hotel used for accommodations (see activity 8). The use of fluorometers in the field depends primarily on the number of units available, the distance between and access to the sampling sites, and the time interval between samples. If only one fluorometer is available, a central location, such as a laboratory, office, or motel, may be best. Typically, samples from several sites are brought to a centrally located fluorometer.
8. Locate suitable accommodations, such as motels or hotels, noting name, address, and phone number of each. Good communications are vital for a successful time-of-travel study.

Selecting dye-injection and sampling sites

As discussed earlier, a considerable reach length may be required for complete lateral mixing of dye injected in the center of the stream. Mixing-length equations used to compute the length of channel necessary for complete lateral mixing yield widely varying results. Much of the difference is related to the definition of "complete mixing." The length of channel necessary to obtain 100-percent lateral mixing may be twice that necessary to reach 95-percent mixing. In this case, percent mixing refers to the uniformity of tracer mass in transport through a flow section; this is described and formulated by Kilpatrick and Cobb (1985).

Complete mixing is seldom sought in time-of-travel studies; 95-percent mixing is optimum, as it does not require such long channel lengths. Yotsukura and Cobb (1972, eq. 29) and Fischer and others (1979, eqs. 5, 10) derived the following equation to estimate the length of channel necessary for optimum lateral mixing from a single-point midchannel injection:

$$L_o=0.1\frac{vB^2}{E_z} \tag{6}$$

where

L_o =length of channel required for optimum mixing, in feet;
v =mean stream velocity, in feet per second;
B =average stream width, in feet; and
E_z=lateral mixing coefficient, in feet squared per second.

Table 1 provides values of E_z for selected depths and slopes to aid in estimating the optimum mixing length from equation 6.

Until the dye is mixed laterally, its movement does not represent that of the total flow. Once the dye extends to both banks, so that time-concentration curves for different points across the stream are virtually equal in area, the time of travel of the water is represented by the movement of the dye cloud along the stream course. In a small stream, lateral mixing is ordinarily accomplished in a short distance relative to the distance at which the cloud is sampled, so no significant errors occur if dye is injected at the head of the reach of interest. The length of stream reach necessary to accomplish lateral mixing in wide or shallow streams may be large; to accurately measure the traveltime between two points on such a stream, the dye needs to be injected a distance L_o, or greater, above the head of the reach. Thus, time-of-travel data will be for the interval from cloud to cloud and will accurately measure the characteristics of the desired reach.

Table 1.—*Values of the lateral mixing coefficient, E_z, for selected average flow depths and slopes*

[Note: $E_z=1.13d^{3/2}s^{1/2}$; *s*, water-surface slope; *d*, mean depth of the stream]

Depth, *d* (feet)	Slope, *s* (foot/foot)					
	0.001	0.002	0.004	0.006	0.008	0.010
1.0	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.11
2.0	.10	.14	.20	.25	.29	.32
3.0	.19	.26	.37	.46	.52	.59
4.0	.29	.40	.57	.70	.81	.90
5.0	.40	.56	.80	.98	1.13	1.26
6.0	.52	.74	1.05	1.29	1.48	1.66
8.0	.81	1.14	1.62	1.98	2.29	2.56
10.0	1.13	1.60	2.26	2.77	3.20	3.57
15.0	2.07	2.94	4.15	5.08	5.87	6.56

Table 2.—*Values for coefficient, K, for different numbers and locations of injection points*

Number and location of injection points	Coefficient, *K*, for 95-percent mixing
One center injection	0.100
Two injection points[1]	0.025
Three injection points[2]	0.011
One side injection point	0.400

[1] For an injection made at the center of each half of flow.

[2] For an injection made at the center of each third of flow.

To avoid having to make the injection an inconveniently long distance upstream so that natural lateral mixing will occur before the dye cloud arrives at the reach being studied, multiple-point or line injections of the dye can be made. This will more fully tag the entire flow, thus reducing the distance required.

Equation 6 can be written as

$$L_o=K\frac{vB^2}{E_z} \tag{7}$$

where K is a variable whose value depends on the location of injection and the number of injections, and the other variables are as previously defined.

The value of K of 0.1 in equation 6 is for 95-percent mixing with a single center injection. Coefficients (K) for this and other conditions are given in table 2.

The effect of injecting tracer at n points, where each injection is at the center of flow of each n equal flow segments, is that the tracer has to mix throughout an equivalent width of about $(1/n)B$. Since B is squared in the mixing-length equation, the value of K for a single-point injection is modified by the factor $(1/n)^2$.

When two flows merge, they may flow a considerable distance before becoming homogeneously mixed. Therefore, when possible, the last sampling section of a subreach should be just above a tributary.

The flow containing the dye at the junction point of a tributary inflow is analogous to a side injection, and the distance to mixing with the tributary flow may be approximated by equation 7 with a K of 0.4. As can be seen in table 2, this mixing distance may be four times greater than that for a center injection. A sampling site below a major tributary should be located a distance at least equal to L_o below the junction. In such cases, several points across the section should be sampled to define the dye distribution. If analysis of the samples indicates that lateral mixing is not complete, it may be necessary to weigh dye concentrations on the basis of lateral discharge distribution.

Lateral mixing is complete if the area of the time-concentration curves observed at different points in the cross section are the same, irrespective of curve shape and magnitude of the peaks. However, complete lateral mixing is not necessarily a prerequisite to a successful time-of-travel measurement.

The dye cloud should be sampled at a minimum of two sites downstream from the point of optimum mixing. Time-concentration curves defined at two or more points in each subreach not only provide better definition of traveltime, but provide dispersion information as well. By using the automatic sampler described earlier, such data can be acquired with a minimum of personnel.

Sometimes there are considerations that make it necessary to subdivide a long reach into shorter subreaches, for example, excessive total traveltime, long cloud-passage times, limitations on dye concentrations at withdrawal points, tributary inflow, the risk of inclement weather, or changes in flow rates. In effect, separate time-of-travel studies of subreaches, rather than a single study of the entire reach, must be made. Often the injection and sampling are carried out concurrently in all the subreaches for more efficient use of manpower and to reduce the risk of complications from inclement weather. Generally, the limitation on reach length is the amount of time required to sample the ever-lengthening dye cloud. In such cases, the automatic sampler can be very useful and may make it unnecessary to subdivide the study of a long reach.

When concurrent injections are to be made, the subreaches should be long enough that the leading edge of an upstream dye cloud will not overtake the trailing edge of the next cloud downstream. It may be desirable to stagger the injections, the most downstream injection being first.

Inflow to a reach from major tributaries is an important planning consideration with respect to dye-dosage requirements and concentration levels at downstream sampling points. It is emphasized that the maximum discharge in a test reach determines the dye dosage. As with water withdrawal points, major tributaries should be considered in determining subreaches.

Dye requirements

Rhodamine WT dye is recommended for time-of-travel measurements. Several empirical equations have been derived for estimating the quantity of dye necessary for a time-of-travel study. For rhodamine WT 20-percent dye, the dosage formula (Kilpatrick, 1970) is

$$V_s=3.4\times10^{-4}\left(\frac{Q_mL}{v}\right)^{0.94}C_P \qquad (8)$$

where

V_s =volume of stock rhodamine WT 20-percent dye, in liters;

Q_m=maximum stream discharge at the downstream site, in cubic feet per second;

L =distance to the downstream site, in miles;

v =mean stream velocity, in feet per second; and

C_p=peak concentration at the downstream sampling site, in micrograms per liter.

The volume of rhodamine WT 20-percent dye required to produce a peak concentration of 1 μg/L can be determined from equation 8 or figure 13 for a range of flow-reach conditions. It should be noted that this equation will yield slightly different results than obtainable using a similar type of equation presented by Kilpatrick and Cobb (1985) for determining dye quantities when making dilution-type discharge measurements. Equation 8 is more applicable to long stream reaches, which are usually involved in time-of-travel tests.

The following example illustrates the method of computing the dye quantity and peak concentrations on a stream having significant tributary flow into the test reach.

Example.—For the stream reach and flow conditions shown in figure 14, calculate the following: A, volume of rhodamine WT 20-percent dye to be injected at mile 0 necessary to produce a peak concentration of 2 μg/L at mile 30; and B, peak concentration to be expected at the water plant at mile 15.

Calculation A:

$$\frac{Q_mL}{v}=\frac{450\text{ ft}^3/\text{s}\times30\text{ mi}}{0.5\text{ ft/s}}=2.7\times10^4.$$

From figure 13, V_s=5.0 L for a peak concentration of 1 μg/L, and V_s=2×5.0=10 L for C_p=2 μg/L.

Calculation B:

$$\frac{Q_mL}{v}=\frac{250\text{ ft}^3/\text{s}\times15\text{ mi}}{0.5\text{ ft/s}}=7.5\times10^3.$$

From figure 13, V_s=1.5 L for 1 μg/L; hence,

$$C_p\text{ at the water plant}=\frac{10}{1.5}=6.67\ \mu\text{g/L}.$$

This concentration is less than the maximum permissible under Geological Survey policy, 10 μg/L; had the

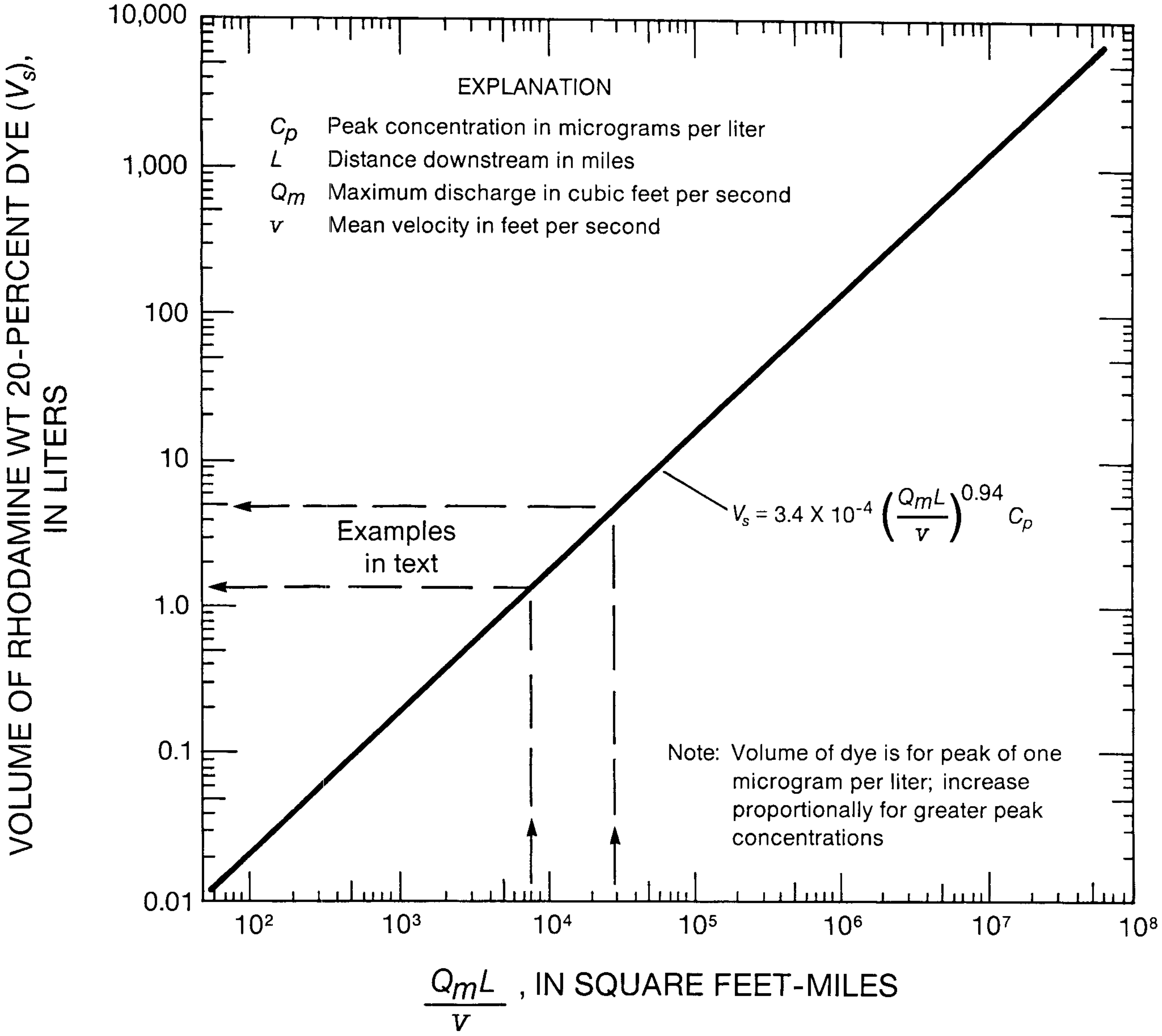


Figure 13.—Quantity of rhodamine WT 20-percent dye required for slug injection to produce a peak concentration of 1 microgram per liter at a distance downstream, L, at a mean velocity, v, and with a maximum discharge, Q_m, in the reach.

concentration been significantly large, the injected volume could have been reduced. Time-of-travel tests have been performed in which the design peak was 0.5 µg/L to reduce dye costs. The use of such low concentrations demands careful fluorometric techniques but is entirely practical with modern fluorometers (Wilson and others, 1986).

In some cases, there may be significant diversions of flow in the test reach that also serve to divert a portion of the injected dye. The following example illustrates the procedure for determining the dye quantity needed when a major diversion of flow takes place in the reach.

Example.—For the stream reach and flow conditions shown in figure 15, determine the volume of rhodamine WT dye to be injected at mile 0 necessary to produce a peak concentration of 2 µg/L at mile 6.

Calculation:

$$\frac{Q_m L}{v} = \frac{195 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s} \times 6 \text{ mi}}{0.5 \text{ ft/s}} = 2.34 \times 10^3.$$

From figure 13, V_s=0.5 L for a peak concentration of 1 µg/L, or 1.0 L for a peak of 2 µg/L.

Only a portion of the dye injected will reach mile 6; therefore, to obtain a peak concentration of 2 µg/L at mile 6, the volume of dye must be increased by the

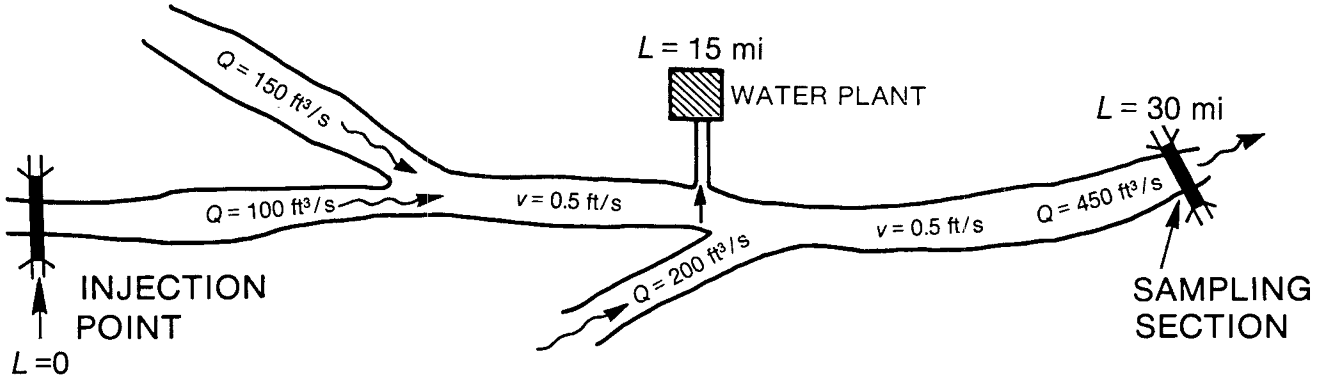


Figure 14.—Stream where a water user is involved and discharge is increasing in the downstream direction. (ft^3/s, cubic feet per second; ft/s, foot per second; mi, miles; Q, stream discharge; v, velocity; L, stream length)

ratio of the discharge above the diversion to the discharge in the stream immediately below the diversion. Therefore, the volume of dye required, with the diversion, is

$$V_s=\frac{1.0\ \text{L}\times 250\ \text{ft}^3/\text{s}}{150\ \text{ft}^3/\text{s}}=1.67\ \text{L, with 0.67 L being diverted.}$$

Sampling schedule

The schedule for collecting samples at each sampling site is the most uncertain aspect of the plan. Estimates of the time to begin sampling, the time intervals between samples, and the duration of sampling must be made that will ensure adequate definition of the dye cloud passing each site. In effect, a conservative estimate of the arrival time of the leading edge and the passage time for the dye cloud is required.

The relationship shown in figure 16 was derived from time-of-travel information collected nationwide. It may be used as a guide for estimating the duration of response curves resulting from the slug injection of a tracer and as an aid in preparing sampling schedules. The equation

$$T_{D_{10}}=0.7\ T_p^{\ 0.86} \qquad (9)$$

provides an estimate of the duration corresponding to the time when the receding concentration reaches 10 percent of the peak. The duration to the time when concentrations reach zero may be two to four times larger and is the reason sampling down to background is not suggested as necessary for *routine time-of-travel studies*.

Estimation of traveltimes is straightforward and involves examination of any current or previous time-of-travel measurements made in the proposed reach, as well as field reconnaissance of the reach if possible. It should be kept in mind that average velocities determined from current-meter measurements normally are faster than the true reach average; steep mountain streams may be an exception.

As part of a regionalization study, Boning (1974) reported two equations to estimate the velocity of a dye cloud's peak concentration, v_p. For pool-and-riffle reaches having slopes, s, ranging from 0.00012 to 0.0057 feet per foot (ft/ft), the equation is

$$v_p=0.38\ Q^{\ 0.40}\ s^{\ 0.20}, \qquad (10)$$

where v_p is in feet per second and Q is discharge in cubic feet per second. For channel-control reaches having slopes ranging from 0.00016 to 0.0023 ft/ft, the equation is

$$v_p=2.69\ Q^{\ 0.26}\ s^{0.28}. \qquad (11)$$

Having estimated the velocity of the peak, the time to peak dye concentration, T_p, in hours, is computed as

$$T_p=1.47\frac{L}{v_p}\ , \qquad (12)$$

where L is in miles and v_p is in feet per second. The curve in figure 16 or equation 9 may now be used to estimate the duration of the dye cloud, T_D, to be expected at each sampling section when the trailing edge is defined to just the 10-percent peak concentration.

Taylor and others (1986) analyzed several hundred sets of time-of-travel data and found that the normal slug-produced time-concentration response curve could be represented as a scalene triangle. In this triangular depiction, one-third of its total duration, $T_{D_{10}}$, was the time, t_b (see fig. 16), from the leading edge to the peak; the remaining two-thirds was the time to recede to a concentration equal to 10 percent of the peak concentration. Referring to figure 16, if $T_{D_{10}}$ is determined for the 10-percent level based on an estimate of T_p, reducing T_p by one-third of $T_{D_{10}}$ will

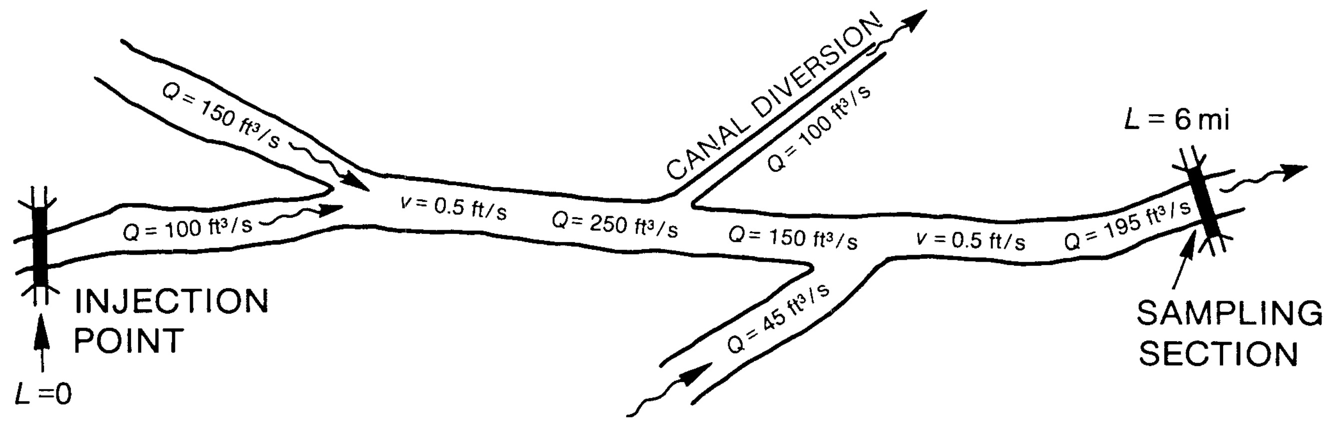


Figure 15.—Stream where flow is increasing in the downstream direction and a major diversion of flow occurs. (ft^3/s, cubic feet per second; ft/s, foot per second; mi, miles; Q, stream discharge; v, velocity; L, stream length)

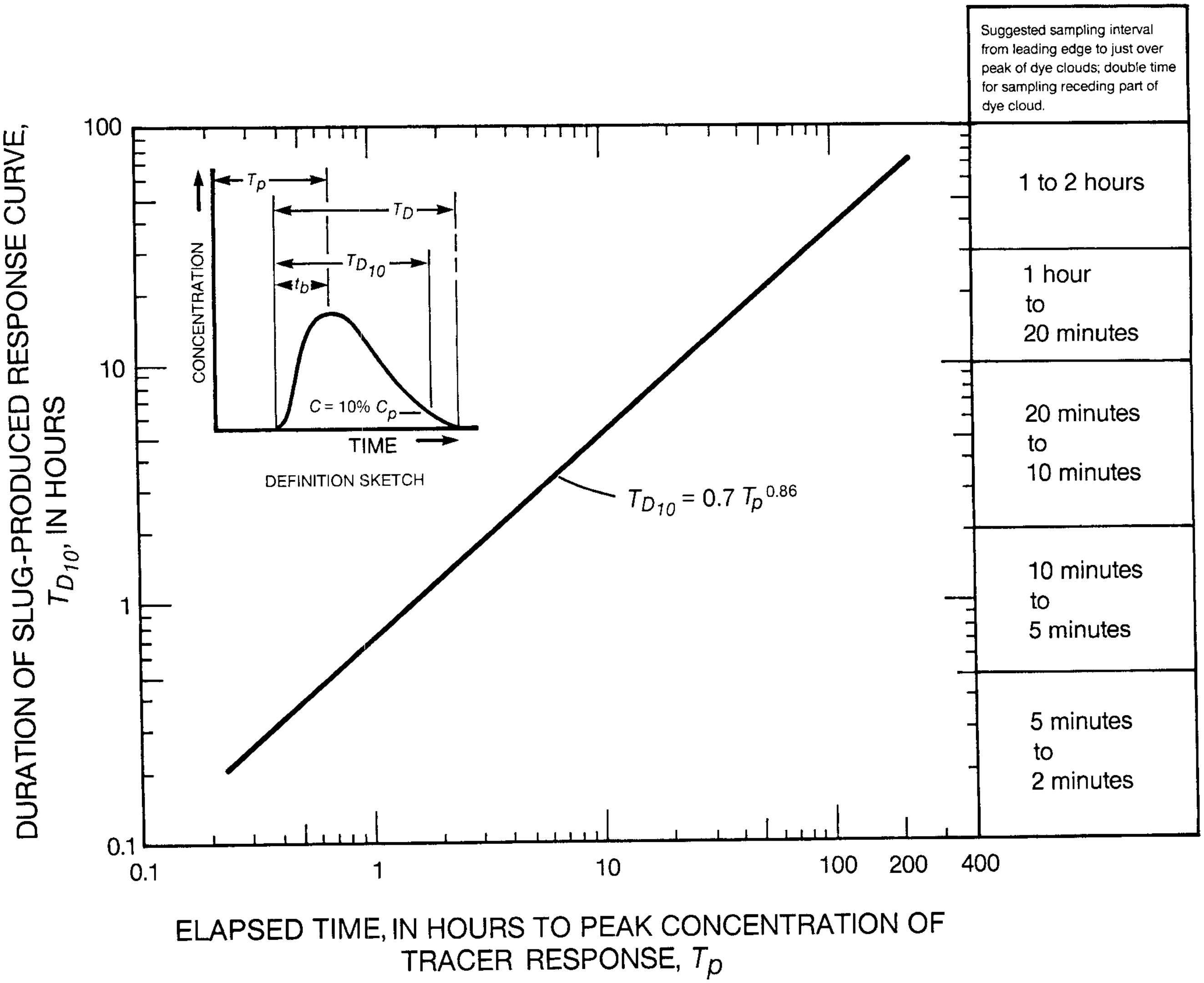


Figure 16.—Relation between traveltime of peak concentration and approximate duration of tracer response. (t_b, time for dye concentration to build up from the leading edge to the peak; C, concentration; C_p, peak dye concentration)

provide an approximation of when the leading edge of the dye will arrive.

Thus the elapsed time to the leading edge of the dye cloud can be estimated as

$$T_L = T_p - \tfrac{1}{3} T_{D_{10}}, \qquad (13)$$

and the trailing edge to the 10-percent level can be estimated as

$$T_{t_{10}} = T_p + \tfrac{2}{3} T_{D_{10}}. \qquad (14)$$

The number and frequency of dye samples also can be approximated from the estimate of $T_{D_{10}}$. The dye slug-response curve can normally be well defined by 30 well-placed data points. Therefore, division of $T_{D_{10}}$ by 30 will give approximately the frequency of sampling needed. More frequent sampling from the leading edge to and *through* the peak and less frequent sampling toward the trailing edge are common practices because of the skewed shape characteristic of most response curves.

The curve in figure 16 and equations 9 through 14 are approximate and should be used for planning purposes only. Rapid fluorometric analysis and plotting of selected samples in the field as quickly as possible after their collection should guide immediate sampling at the first sampling section as well as schedule modification for more downstream sections.

The measurement plan

The measurement plan is an orderly determination of the dye requirements, injection instructions, sampling schedules, sample disposition, and personnel assignments. The plan should include the following:

1. Injection:
    a. A detailed description of each injection site.
    b. The quantity of dye to be injected at each site.
    c. The times of injection.
    d. Instructions for injecting the dye.
2. Sampling:
    a. A detailed description of each sampling site.
    b. The number of points in the cross section to be sampled at each site.
    c. A sampling schedule giving starting time, sampling frequency, and ending time for each site.
    d. Instructions regarding discharge measurement, staff-gage reading, or measurement of distance from a reference point to the water surfaces, if needed.

Personnel and equipment assignments

The number of individuals assigned to each injection site will vary depending on the quantity of dye and the method of injection.

Usually one person can handle the sampling requirements at each sampling site, with assistance from the fluorometer operator as necessary. When sampling is done from a boat, two people should be assigned to that site.

When the measurement reach is divided into subreaches, the party chief usually is responsible for dye injection and the collection and disposition of samples in one or more subreaches.

The measurement plan should list the name, location, and telephone number of lodging accommodations for all personnel. It should also show the assignment of equipment to the various individuals and party chiefs.

Maps and tables are very useful for briefing personnel and for reference. In fact, the entire measurement plan—including injection and sampling instructions, personnel assignments, and equipment disposition—may be put on a map. The map should show sampling sites, injection points, the road and bridge system, lodging, towns, and landmarks. The map should be supplemented with sketches of hard-to-find sites.

Performance of Field Test

Injection of dye

A single slug injection of dye is usually made in the center or in the main thread of flow. As mentioned previously, the injection should be made L_o upstream from the head of the reach, unless L_o is insignificant compared with the test-reach length. Note in figure 11 that two of the three dye injections were made a mile or two upstream from the first sampling site making up the subreach. In the case of the third injection, the first subreach was extended to site 7, overlapping the second subreach. Similarly, multiple-point injections or line injections across the stream may be used where the channel is wide or the flow is shallow. The line injection should be made in the middle half to two-thirds of the flow and not too near the banks. The time required to cross the stream is usually insignificant, and injection may be considered instantaneous. For each injection, the type and amount of dye and the stream stage and discharge should be noted.

The dye cloud will remain visible for some time and distance downstream following injection, depending on the amount of dye used and on stream conditions. While visible, the dye can easily be followed for a short distance, making possible a rough estimate of its arrival time at the first sampling site.

Collection of water samples

At least one water sample is needed for a fluorometer reading of background fluorescence at each site before the dye arrives. If the site is also to be used as an injection site, the background samples should be collected before injecting the dye or should be taken upstream from the point of injection. Sampling should begin early enough to ensure not missing the leading edge of the dye cloud. Usually, it is not necessary to sample more than a few inches below the water surface. If vertical mixing is complete, the concentration will be the same throughout the vertical.

Water samples should also be taken at this time at any water-supply withdrawal points for evaluating and documenting nitrite concentrations during the test.

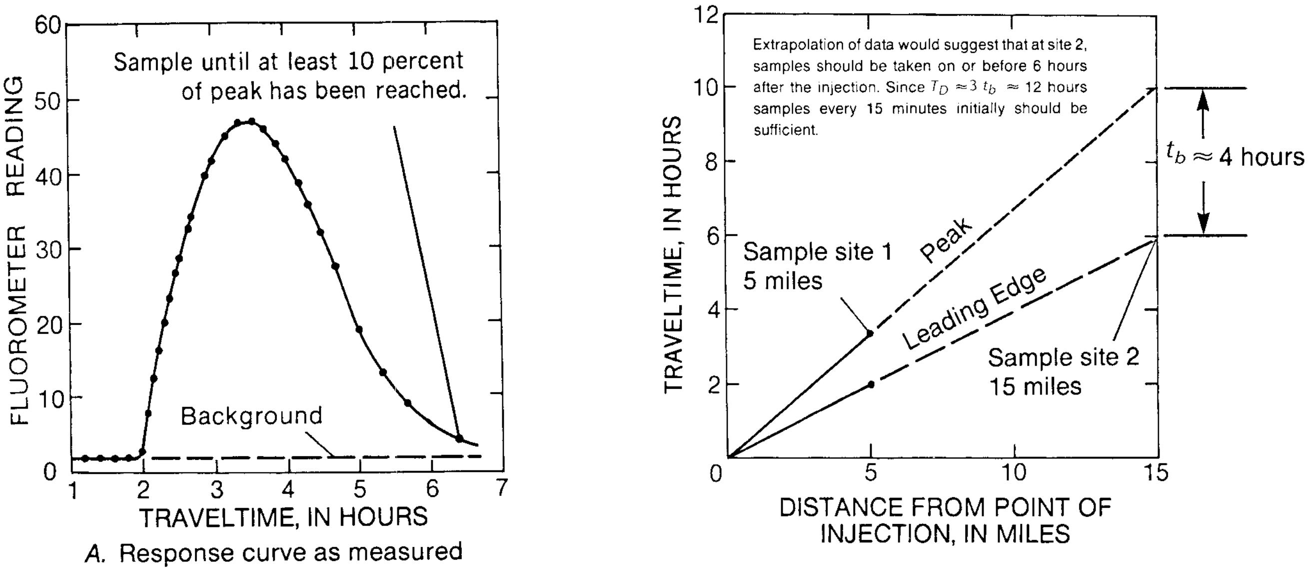
Use of fluorometers

Fluorometric testing of samples in the field is recommended to guide subsequent sampling. The use of a fluorometer at the first sampling section permits on-the-spot detection of dye. The preliminary fluorometer results can be used as a basis for altering the schedule to obtain 20 to 30 samples at proper time intervals to define the time-concentration curve at a sampling point. Field plots of dial readings against time, and of distance against time of leading edge and peak, as illustrated in figure 17, can be extrapolated to check or adjust the downstream sampling schedules. It should be noted that a straight line extrapolation from $t=0$ will yield a larger cloud duration than will actually occur (as defined by fig. 16 and eq. 9). Nevertheless, prompt examination of the data in the field can ensure that data is not missed.

Ideally, sampling should continue until concentrations are down to the background level. If this is not practical, it is recommended that samples be collected until concentrations (or dial readings) have reached either 10 percent of the peak or 0.2 µg/L, whichever is lower.

Unless unusually good conditions exist, accurate fluorometric analysis in the field is not practical using any but the most modern fluorometers. Some of the older fluorometers require shielding from the sun while in use because light may leak into the instrument and cause erroneous responses. Depending on the fluorometer, the need to move from site to site with the movement of the dye cloud may preclude adequate instrument warmup and sample-temperature control, especially the latter. Basic time-of-travel information can be derived from field tests, but accurate measurement of sample concentration ordinarily should be done in an office or laboratory under control conditions. Fluorometer readings for samples tested in the field should be recorded, and the notes should be retained on the data sheet, as shown in figure 6, even though retesting is contemplated.

Some newer fluorometer models are light-tight, require a short warmup time, and do not increase the temperature of the sample. A number of investigators have established field laboratories in a motel, or elsewhere, and have achieved accurate results with



Sample until at least 10 percent of peak has been reached.

Extrapolation of data would suggest that at site 2, samples should be taken on or before 6 hours after the injection. Since $T_D \approx 3\ t_b \approx 12$ hours samples every 15 minutes initially should be sufficient.

A. Response curve as measured in field at first sample site, mile 5.

B. Time-distance plot extrapolation

Figure 17.—Use of data collected at the first sampling site to schedule sampling at succeeding downstream sites. (T_D, time for entire tracer cloud to pass a section; t_b, time for dye concentration to build up from the leading edge to the peak)

less delay than would be involved in transporting the samples from the field. If standard solutions are on hand and have the same temperature as the stream samples, fluorometer readings obtained in this manner may be considered satisfactory for final use.

Measurement of discharge

The stream discharge should be measured or otherwise determined at each sampling site at the time the dye is present. Stage reference marks at each sampling site can be used in conjunction with current-meter discharge measurements to rate each site; this is helpful if several time-of-travel tests at different discharges are contemplated.

Analysis and Presentation of Data

Laboratory analysis

The samples collected in the field should be reanalyzed if the field analysis was not adequate. This is especially true if more comprehensive interpretations, such as prediction or simulation of waste concentrations and movement (Kilpatrick and Taylor, 1986), are contemplated.

The form shown in figure 6 provides for recording both field and laboratory data. The laboratory work can be expedited, when the Turner model 111 fluorometer is being used, if the analysis can be made using only one fluorometer scale. By inspection of the field data or by trial, select the scale that will yield the maximum reading for the sample representing the peak concentration for the sampling site. All samples for this site can then be analyzed on this one scale, minimizing the number of fluorometer scales that will need calibrating. For this reason, it is convenient to calibrate the fluorometer after the samples for each day have been tested and the scales actually used are known. This is not necessary with the Turner Design model 10, as this fluorometer automatically switches to the most desirable scale. Examination of the field data can guide preparation of calibration standards to best cover just the range of concentrations to be expected.

Time-concentration curves

Time-concentration curves are useful in illustrating the techniques used in the dye study and represent the responses to a given slug injection. The concepts of leading edge, peak, centroid, and trailing edge can easily be explained on these graphs. Although more sophisticated methods of data presentation are available, time-concentration curves show in the simplest way the travel and dispersion of the solute cloud as it moves downstream.

The concentration for each sample should be plotted against elapsed time, and a smooth curve fitted to the points. The typical curve, shown in figure 2, is bell shaped but always slightly steeper on the rising limb than on the falling limb. The tail is usually much longer and flatter than the leading edge and approaches the zero-concentration level asymptotically.

As an example, the time-concentration curves for sampling sites 2 through 12 are shown in figure 18 for the Shenandoah River tests performed in September 1983 (Taylor and others, 1986) at a flow having a duration of 85 percent. These sites make up the two upstream subreaches (see fig. 11). It will be noted that two time-concentration curves were measured at site 7, the last site sampled for the upstream injection and the first for the second subreach. Note the change in the vertical concentration scale between sites 4 and 5; the marked reduction in concentrations resulted from the diluting effect of the major inflow from the North

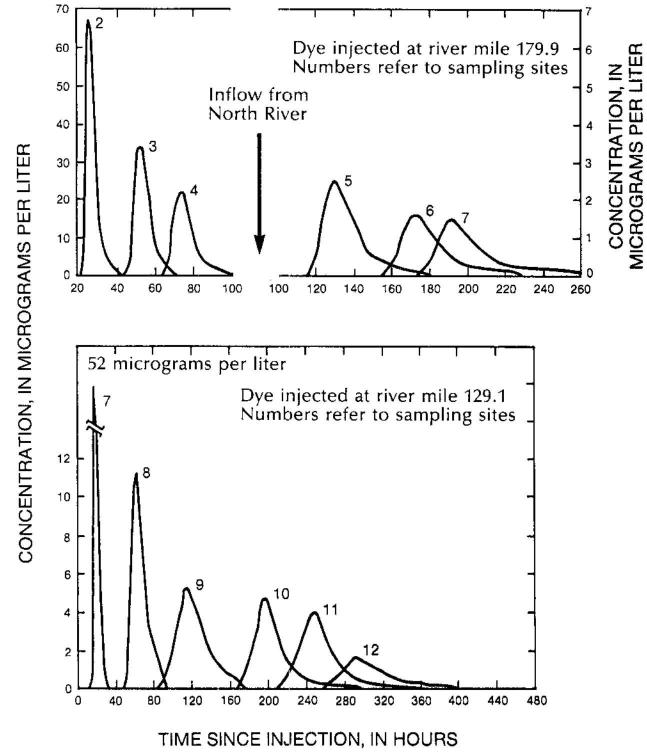


Figure 18.—Observed time-concentration curves for the September 1983 time-of-travel tests on the South Fork Shenandoah River, Virginia; 85-percent flow duration. (See fig. 11 and table 3.)

River. Despite this, longitudinal dispersion in the reach remained relatively constant.

Traveltime

The elapsed times and traveltimes of the leading edge, the peak concentration, and the trailing edge of the dye clouds are determined from the time-concentration curves for each sampling site. Elapsed time is the time from the injection of the dye to the particular part of the response curve of interest. Traveltime is the time of travel between common parts of the response curves: leading edge, peak, centroid, and so forth. It is common practice to define the trailing edge time as the time when the concentration decreases to a level of 10 percent of the peak concentration observed at a sampling site. Typically these data are presented in tabular form, such as table 3. A graphical presentation of these data, as shown in figure 19, provides a clear picture of how dispersion elongates the tracer cloud. Figure 19 shows cumulative traveltime data for both dye studies performed on the Shenandoah. The data used in this summation process are traveltimes from cloud to cloud rather than elapsed times from points of injection. This is why the subreaches were overlapped (see table 3 and fig. 11) or the injections were made a mixing distance upstream from the reach of interest.

The curves in figure 19 are for the two flow durations selected for testing. It is desirable to interpolate between these values to make the results more usable. The velocities of the leading edge, the peak concentration, and the trailing edge of the dye cloud between successive sampling sites can be calculated by dividing the segment lengths by the traveltimes (table 3). In figure 20, these velocities are plotted on log-log paper as a function of the average daily discharge(s) observed at an index gaging station during the time the dye cloud moved between the two sampling sites. Straight lines are drawn through the points derived from the two studies to represent the leading edge, peak concentration, and trailing edge. Such plots are done independently for the discharges at each index station.

The relations described above are entered with discharges corresponding to selected flow-duration values of 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, and 95 percent for the index gaging station(s) used; table 4 shows these data for the test reach between sites 7 and 8 on the Shenandoah River (see fig. 11) using the Front Royal gaging station as the index station. In a similar manner, incremental velocities are determined at 10 flow durations for an entire test reach.

The distance between sampling sites is then divided by these incremental velocities to provide an incremental traveltime at each of the 10 flow durations for leading edge, peak concentration, and the trailing edge. In table 5, for the Shenandoah River example, incremental times are accumulated from Waynesboro to Harpers Ferry. Figure 21 is a graphical presentation of these data. Similar tables and figures may be presented for the leading and trailing edge traveltimes. These data and curves can be used to estimate the time required for a soluble substance to move from *any* point in the study reach to *any* point downstream. The similarity between figures 19 and 21 should be noted. Figure 21 provides the information for an entire range of flows, in contrast to figure 19, which is the observed data for the two test flows. The graphical presentations allow a straight-line interpolation between sampling sites and may be easier to use than the tabular data in situations in which the points of interest are not at the sampling sites used in the study.

Numerous approaches have been used to present time-of-travel information. The approach chosen should be readily usable in predicting the rate of movement of a solute, which might be spilled at *any location* and at *any discharge*, and should be related to some index gaging station. Thus, except in certain worst case scenarios (usually extreme low flow), it is highly advisable to perform field tests at more than one stream discharge. For example, Jack (1986) found that the traveltime of a solute peak on the South Branch Potomac River from Petersburg, W. Va., to its confluence with the North Branch Potomac River, a distance of 69 mi, would vary from about 3 days at 1,500 ft^3/s to 18 days at 70 ft^3/s! Jack performed time-of-travel tests at two flow durations, 32 and 95 percent, and therefore was able to provide curves for predicting the rate of solute movement over a broad range of flows. A single time-of-travel test would be of little predictive value.

Regionalization

Time-of-travel and dispersion data have been regionalized with some success. Boning (1974) regionalized data from 873 studies on streams—for a variety of sizes, slopes, and discharges—throughout the United States. Separating the study reaches into three categories—pool and riffle, channel controlled, and lock and dam—Boning regressed leading edge and peak velocities with channel length and slope, discharge, and channel storage (for lock-and-dam reaches). He was able to derive empirical predictive equations with standard errors of ±50 percent or less. In fact, the relations for estimating the velocities of the peak and leading edge in channel-controlled reaches had a standard error of only ±26 percent.

Table 3.—*Traveltime data for dye study of September 1983 on the South Fork Shenandoah River, Virginia and West Virginia*

[Site locations shown in fig. 11. mi, mile; h, hour; mi/h, mile per hour]

		Distance			Leading edge				Peak concentration				Trailing edge			
Site No.	Site name	Upstream from mouth (mi)	Sub-reach length (mi)	From point of injection (mi)	Time since injection (h)	Travel-time (h)	Cumulative travel-time (h)	Velocity (mi/h)	Time since injection (h)	Travel-time (h)	Cumulative travel-time (h)	Velocity (mi/h)	Time since injection (h)[1]	Travel-time (h)	Cumulative travel-time (h)	Velocity (mi/h)
Injected 12 liters of 20-percent rhodamine WT dye at 1700 hours on September 6, 1983, at Mile 179.9																
1	Waynesboro	178.5		1.4	3		0		4		0		6		0	
			5.3			18		0.294		22		0.241		28		0.189
2	Hopeman Parkway	173.2		6.7	21		18		26		22		34		28	
			7.4			23		.322		26		.285		32		.231
3	Crimora	165.8		14.1	44		41		52		48		66		60	
			6.4			20		.320		23		.278		25		.256
4	Harriston	159.4		20.5	64		61		75		71		91		85	
			16.8			52		.323		56		.300		67		.251
5	Island Ford	142.6		37.3	116		113		131		127		158		152	
			13.5			40		.338		42		.321		52		.260
6	Shenandoah	129.1		50.8	156		153		173		169		210		204	
			7.9			18		.439		20		.395		26		.304
7	Grove Hill	121.2		58.7	174		171		193		189		236		230	
Injected 35 liters of 20-percent rhodamine WT dye at 1455 hours on September 6, 1983, at Mile 129.1																
7	Grove Hill	121.2		7.9	14		---		17		---		24		---	
			15.0			36		.417		46		.326		63		.238
8	U.S. Highway 211	106.2		22.9	50		207		63		235		87		293	
			7.0			34		.206		52		.135		76		.092
9	Bixler Bridge	99.2		29.9	84		241		115		287		163		369	
			26.1			78		.335		81		.322		85		.307
10	Bentonville	73.1		56.0	162		319		196		368		248		454	
			15.4			46		.335		50		.308		57		.270
11	Front Royal	57.7		71.4	208		365		246		418		305		511	
			10.2			48		.212		46		.222		73		.140
12	Morgan Ford	47.5		81.6	256		413		292		464		378		584	
Injected 57 liters of 20-percent rhodamine WT dye at 1100 hours on September 6, 1983, at Mile 52.4																
12	Morgan Ford	47.5		4.9	13		---		23		---		111		---	
			10.9			23		.474		35		.311		32		.341
13	U.S. Highway 17 & 50	36.6		15.8	36		436		58		499		143		616	
			14.5			28		.518		31		.468		33		.439
14	State Highway 7	22.1		30.3	64		464		89		530		176		649	
			13.7			35		.391		38		.360		43		.319
15	State Highway 9	8.4		44.0	99		499		127		568		219		692	
			7.6			32		.238		38		.200		43		.177
16	Harpers Ferry	0.8		51.6	131		531		165		606		262		735	

[1] Determined at 10 percent of peak concentration.

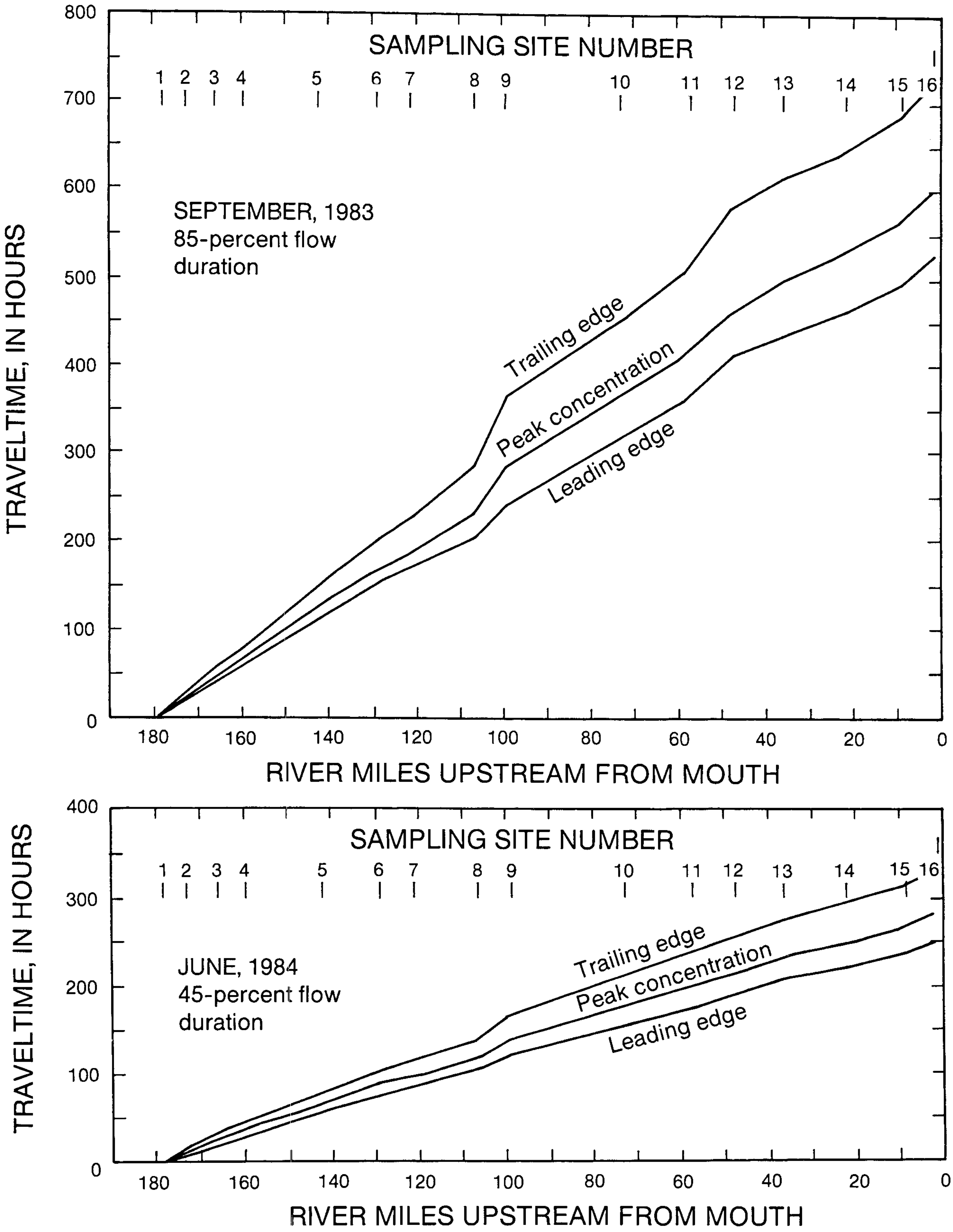


Figure 19.—Cumulative traveltime for the South Fork Shenandoah River, Virginia and West Virginia (from Taylor and others, 1986).

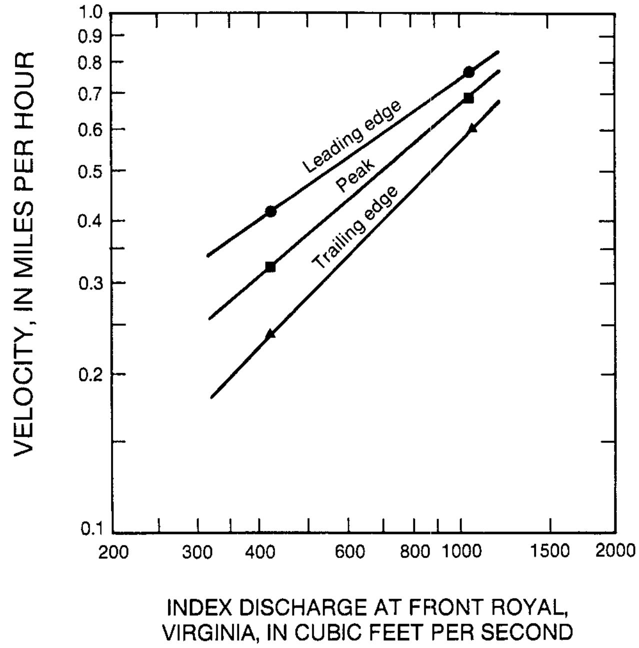


Figure 20.—Plot of traveltime velocities in reach between sites 7 and 8 as a function of index discharges at the Front Royal station on the South Fork Shenandoah River, Virginia (from Taylor and others, 1986).

Table 4.—*Example showing velocities as computed for a 15-mile test reach between sites 7 and 8 on the Shenandoah River versus selected flow durations at the Front Royal, Virginia, index station*

[ft^3/s, cubic feet per second; mi/h, mile per hour; Q, stream discharge]

Flow duration		Velocity, mi/h		
Percent	Q, in ft^3/s	Peak	Leading edge	Trailing edge
40	1,190	0.770	0.830	0.670
50	930	.620	.700	.520
60	728	.505	.595	.405
65	647	.460	.550	.365
70	579	.420	.510	.330
75	521	.385	.470	.295
80	468	.350	.440	.265
85	421	.315	.410	.235
90	377	.295	.380	.213
95	318	.255	.335	.178

In view of the uncertainties of applying time-of-travel data to an emergency situation, these standard errors of estimate might be acceptable because many spills occur on streams or stream reaches where no previous studies have been made. In such situations, regionalized data would be very useful.

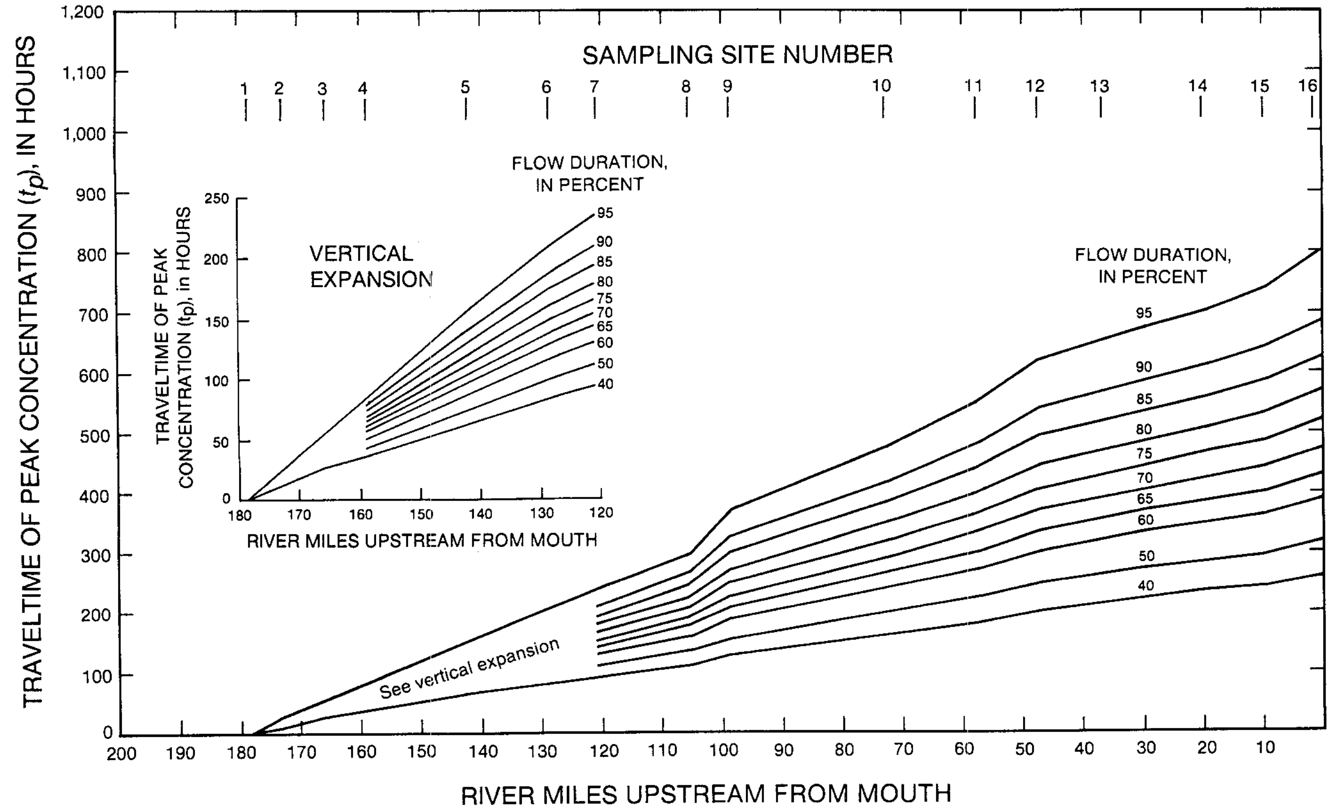


Figure 21.—Traveltime-distance relation for peak concentrations of a solute at selected flow durations, South Fork Shenandoah River from Waynesboro, Virginia, to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (from Taylor and others, 1986).

Table 5.—*Traveltimes for peak concentration of a solute on the South Fork Shenandoah River at selected flow durations*

[Site locations shown in fig. 11]

Site No.	Site name	Miles upstream from mouth	Distance between sampling sites (miles)	Traveltime of peak concentration of dye cloud, in hours, for indicated flow duration, in percent									
				40	50	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95
1	Waynesboro	178.5	5.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Hopeman Parkway	173.2	7.4	12	14	16	17	19	20	21	22	24	26
3	Crimora	165.8	6.4	26	30	35	38	41	43	46	49	52	57
4	Harriston (index gage)	159.4	16.8	37	43	51	56	60	64	68	72	77	85
5	Island Ford	142.6	13.5	63	74	87	96	104	112	120	130	140	157
6	Shenandoah	129.1	7.9	84	99	116	128	138	149	160	173	186	209
7	Grove Hill	121.2	15.0	94	111	131	144	155	168	181	196	211	237
8	U.S. Highway 211	106.2	7.0	114	136	161	177	192	208	225	245	265	299
9	Bixler Bridge	99.2	26.1	132	159	190	210	229	250	272	298	325	370
10	Bentonville	73.1	15.4	165	200	242	267	292	319	349	383	418	479
11	Front Royal (index gage)	57.7	10.2	186	227	274	304	333	365	400	441	482	554
12	Morgan Ford	47.5	10.9	206	252	306	339	373	410	449	495	542	625
13	U.S. Highway 17 & 50	36.6	14.5	219	267	324	359	394	433	474	522	571	658
14	State Highway 7	22.1	13.7	233	284	344	381	418	460	503	554	605	697
15	State Highway 9	8.4	7.6	249	303	368	408	448	492	539	593	648	748
16	Harpers Ferry	.8		263	321	390	432	475	522	571	629	688	794

The standard errors of estimate in the Boning study are not extremely large when the problem of application of the predictive relation and the noise inherent in the data are considered.

Regionalization in a more limited area, such as a State or a river basin, would probably reduce standard error to even lower levels than those attained by Boning. For example, in an Indiana study, Eikenberry and Davis (1976) derived predictive equations to estimate traveltime of peak concentrations for selected discharges in streams having drainage areas of 80 square miles or more. The standard error of these equations ranged from ±16 to ±18 percent for tributary streams and from only ±11 to ±15 percent for main-stem streams.

Calandro (1978) developed regional relationships for Louisiana streams using data from tests on 18 streams. Multiple tests at different discharges were performed on 9 of the 18 streams. Calandro found that for Louisiana streams, traveltime (as contrasted with velocity) was most significantly related to reach length, drainage area, and discharge. He depicted this using nomographs for the leading edge, peak, and trailing edge traveltimes, as illustrated in figure 22.

Parker and Gay (1987) performed a similar type of regionalization for Massachusetts streams using 30 sets of tracer test data from 16 river reaches. They were able to relate mean velocity to discharge, slope, and channel width.

In the initial planning of any time-of-travel study, consideration should be given to collecting the additional data that would permit regionalization in the future; these data should be acquired *at the time of each test*. It may be concluded that discharge, slope, mean depth and width, and storage where significant, as well as type of flow, are the principal variables and information to be considered in any regionalization. If mean width is determined or estimated, mean depth can be calculated using the continuity equation, with the velocity obtained from the time-of-travel tests:

$$d=Q/Bv. \qquad (15)$$

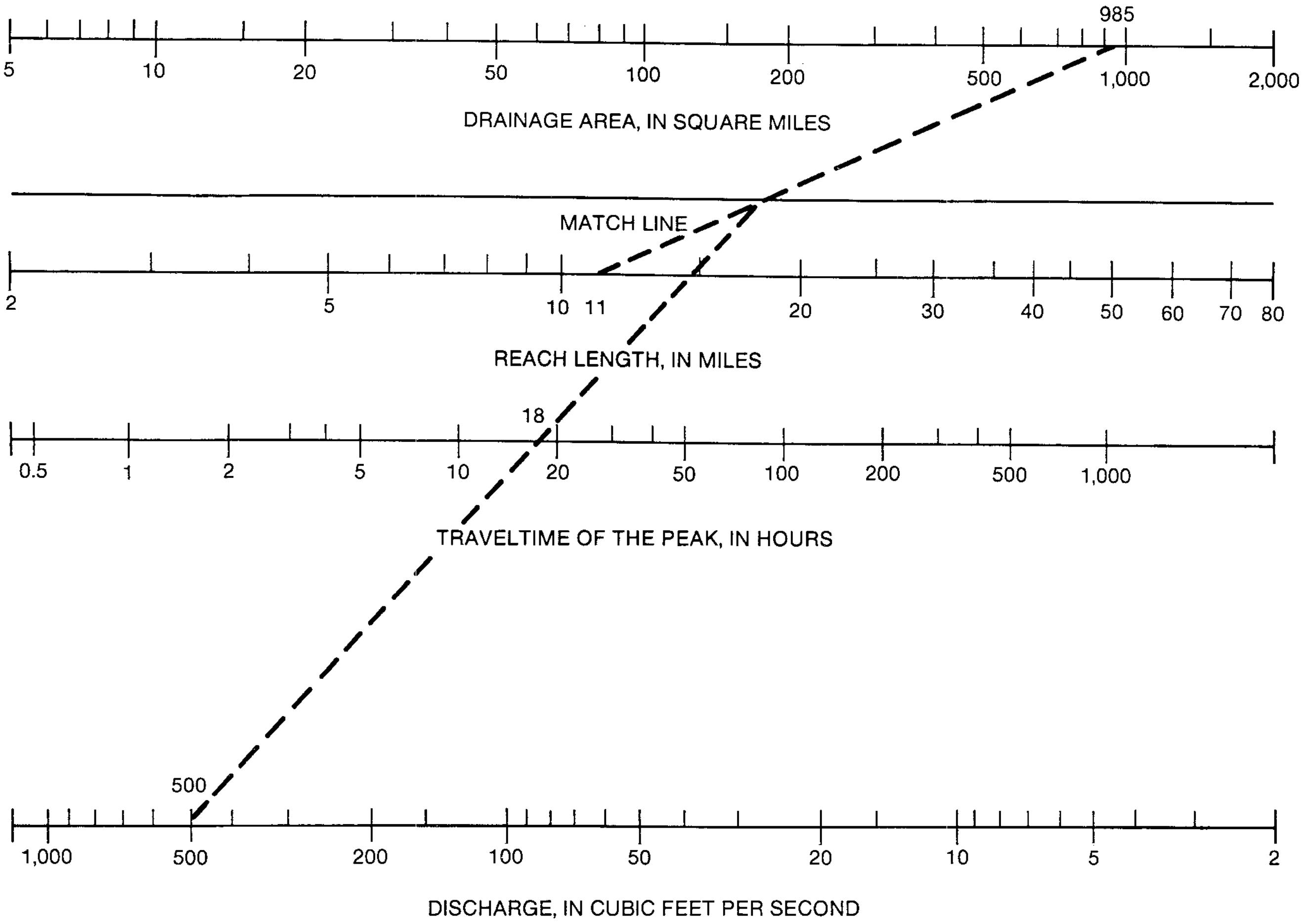


Figure 22.—Relation of traveltime of the peak concentration to drainage area, reach length, and discharge for Louisiana streams (from Calandro, 1978).

Summary

Dye tracing has proved to be a practical means of measuring time of travel during either steady or gradually varied flow in streams. Dye injected into a stream behaves much the same as water molecules, moving on the average at the same rate as the water.

When dye is released in a stream, it disperses in three directions—vertically, laterally, and longitudinally. After an initial mixing period, dispersion is complete in the vertical and lateral directions and disperses only longitudinally, a process that continues indefinitely.

Although a number of dyes are available for water tracing, rhodamine WT, specifically formulated for water tracing, is recommended, principally because it is the most conservative of the dyes available.

Significant effort is usually necessary in planning a successful dye study. Tests should be planned for two or more flow durations. The next step is acquisition and assimilation of available data, including maps and previous discharge measurements. The investigator should conduct a reconnaissance of the stream to inspect sampling and injection sites, to locate dams, diversions, and water intakes, and to work out logistical problems. The discharge, length, and water velocity of the reach must be measured or estimated to determine the minimum reach length required for completion of initial mixing and to calculate the amount of dye to be injected. A study plan must be devised, which includes sampling and dye-injection schedules, descriptions of the sampling and injection sites, personnel assignments, equipment assignments, and maps.

Dye is usually injected near the main thread of flow in a narrow stream or, in a wide stream, in a series of injections or by continuous pouring across the width of the stream to achieve the quickest possible lateral mixing. A sample of water should be taken at a sampling site prior to the arrival of the dye to obtain a background fluorometer reading, which is to be subtracted from recorded readings measured during the passage of the dye cloud. Having a fluorometer available at the sampling site enables the sampler to monitor the passage of the dye and to estimate the time of arrival of the leading edge at the next sampling site downstream. However, depending on the fluorometer, final dye concentrations may have to be determined under more controlled conditions because ambient temperature, light, and other factors affect fluorescence and fluorometer performance. The sampling at a site should continue until the dye concentration is 10 percent or less of the peak concentration. To meet the objectives of most studies, it is necessary to determine stream discharge during passage of the dye.

Typically, final concentrations of dye in the samples are determined under carefully controlled conditions. Samples are brought to a uniform temperature, commonly using a constant temperature bath. Due care must be exercised to ensure that the fluorometer is working properly and is accurately calibrated by using a sample from the same lot as the dye that was injected.

Traveltime-distance curves are used to show the time required for a solute to move through the study reach. They can be for any or all the features of a solute cloud—leading edge, peak, centroid, and trailing edge. Preferably, studies are conducted for two or more discharges to permit preparation of traveltime-discharge curves.

Time-of-travel data can be regionalized by using multiple-regression techniques to derive empirical equations, using discharge, slope, reach length, channel width and depth, and storage as parameters.

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