Accepted Manuscript

Research papers

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Flavia Pelizardi, Sergio A. Bea, Jesús Carrera, Luis Vives

PII:	S0022-1694(17)30231-7
DOI:	http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhydrol.2017.04.010
Reference:	HYDROL 21941
To appear in:	Journal of Hydrology
Received Date:	22 January 2017
Accepted Date:	3 April 2017



Please cite this article as: Pelizardi, F., Bea, S.A., Carrera, J., Vives, L., Identifying geochemical processes using End Member Mixing Analysis to decouple chemical components for mixing ratio calculations, *Journal of Hydrology* (2017), doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhydrol.2017.04.010

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Identifying geochemical processes using End Member Mixing Analysis to decouple

chemical components for mixing ratio calculations

Flavia Pelizardi¹, Sergio A. Bea^{1,2}, Jesús Carrera³, Luis Vives¹

¹ Instituto de Hidrología de Llanuras "Dr. Eduardo J. Usunoff". Av. República de Italia 780

- 7300 Azul, Buenos Aires - Argentina - +54 2281 432666 - pelizardi@faa.unicen.edu.ar

² CONICET, Av. Rivadavia 1917 - C1033AAJ Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires -Argentina

³ GHS UPC-CSIC, Instituto de diagnóstico Ambiental y Estudios del Agua (IDAEA), CSIC, Jordi Girona 18-26, 08034 Barcelona, España

ABSTRACT

Mixing calculations (i.e., the calculation of the proportions in which end-members are mixed in a sample) are essential for hydrological research and water management. However, they typically require the use of conservative species, a condition that may be difficult to meet due to chemical reactions. Mixing calculation also require identifying end-member waters, which is usually achieved through End Member Mixing Analysis (EMMA). We present a methodology to help in the identification of both end-members and such reactions, so as to improve mixing ratio calculations. The proposed approach consists of: (1) identifying the potential chemical reactions using EMMA; (2) defining decoupled conservative chemical components consistent with those reactions; (3) repeat EMMA with the decoupled (i.e., conservative) components, so as to identify end-members waters; and (4) computing mixing ratios using the new set of components and end-members. The approach is illustrated by application to two synthetic mixing examples involving mineral dissolution and cation exchange reactions. Results confirm that the methodology can be successfully used to identify geochemical processes affecting the mixtures, thus improving the accuracy of mixing ratios calculations and relaxing the need for conservative species.

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