

## **The U-Tube: A Novel System for Sampling and Analyzing Multi-phase Borehole Fluid Samples during the Frio Brine Pilot Test**

Barry M. Freifeld<sup>1</sup>, Robert C. Trautz<sup>1</sup>, Yousif K. Kharaka<sup>2</sup>, Tommy J. Phelps<sup>3</sup>, Larry R. Myer<sup>1</sup>, Susan D. Hovorka<sup>4</sup>, and Daniel J. Collins<sup>5</sup>

1. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, CA 94720
2. U. S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, CA 94035
3. Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN 37830
4. Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78713
5. Sandia Technologies LLC, Houston, TX, 77066

### **Abstract**

A novel system has been deployed to sample and analyze multiphase fluids during a geologic CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration experiment conducted in the Frio brine aquifer in Liberty County, Texas. Project goals required high frequency recovery of representative and uncontaminated aliquots of a rapidly changing two-phase (supercritical CO<sub>2</sub>-brine) fluid from 1.5 km depth. The data sets, collected using both the liquid and gas portions of the downhole samples, provide insights into the coupled hydro-geochemical issues affecting CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration in brine formations. The U-tube consists of a continuous loop of tubing open to the formation using a check valve. High purity compressed nitrogen is used to close the downhole check valve and drive the sample to the surface. The sample is collected at formation pressure, preventing degassing and contamination with outside gases, which would lead to rapid changes in sample chemistry. While the basic premise underlying the U-Tube sampler is not new, the system is unique because careful consideration was given to the processing of the recovered two-phase fluids. More specifically, strain gages mounted beneath the high-pressure surface sample cylinders measure the ratio of recovered brine to supercritical CO<sub>2</sub>. A quadrupole mass spectrometer provided real-time gas analysis for perfluorocarbon and noble gas tracers that were injected along with the CO<sub>2</sub>. The U-Tube successfully acquired frequent samples, allowing accurate delineation of the arrival of the CO<sub>2</sub> plume, and on-site analysis revealed rapid changes in geochemical conditions.

Presenting author: Robert Trautz [rtrautz@lbl.gov](mailto:rtrautz@lbl.gov) Voice: (510) 486-7954 Fax: (510) 486-5686

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory  
MS 90-1116  
One Cyclotron Rd  
Berkeley, CA 94720

Larry Myer (same address) [lrmeyer@lbl.gov](mailto:lrmeyer@lbl.gov) Voice (510) 486-6456 Fax: (510) 486-5686  
Barry Freifeld (same address) [bmfreifeld@lbl.gov](mailto:bmfreifeld@lbl.gov) Voice (510) 486-4381 Fax: (510) 486-5686

Yousif Kharaka, Research Geochemist  
U. S. Geological Survey, MS 427  
345, Middlefield Road  
Menlo Park, California 94025, USA  
Phone: (650) 329-4535 Fax: (650) 329-4538 [ykharaka@usgs.gov](mailto:ykharaka@usgs.gov)

Daniel J. Collins  
Sandia Technologies, LLC.  
140 Cypress Station Drive, Suite 130  
Houston, TX 77090  
Phone: (281) 586-5860 Fax: (281) 586-5870  
[Dan.Collins@sandiatech.com](mailto:Dan.Collins@sandiatech.com)

Dr. Susan Hovorka  
Bureau of Economic Geology  
Jackson School of Geosciences  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX 78713  
phone (512) 471-4863, fax (512) 471-0140  
[susan.hovorka@beg.utexas.edu](mailto:susan.hovorka@beg.utexas.edu)