TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY viii
1. INTRODUCTION ix
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ix
3. METHODOLOGY ix
4. GOLD MINE TAILINGS AS A POTENTIAL POLLUTION SOURCE FOR THE SUBSURFACE x
4.1 Impact on the unsaturated zone x
4.2 Impact on the saturated zone xii
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS xiii
6. RECOMMENDATIONS xvi

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 MOTIVATION 1
1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY 3
1.3 SCOPE OF INVESTIGATIONS 4
1.4 PREVIOUS WORK AND RELATED STUDIES 5
1.5 REPORT STRUCTURE 9
1.6 REPORT RESPONSIBILITIES 10
1.7 CONFIDENTIALITY OF SITE DATA 10

CHAPTER 2 – GOLD-MINE RESIDUE DEPOSITS IN SOUTH AFRICA 11
2.1 INTRODUCTION 11
2.2 LEGISLATION 12
2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF MINE RESIDUE DEPOSITS 13
2.3 DEPOSITION APPROACHES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TAILINGS IMPOUNDMENTS 15
2.4 GEOHYDROLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF TAILINGS DAMS 17
2.4.1 Seepage losses from tailings dams 18
2.4.2 Seepage control approaches 19
2.5 RECLAMATION OF MINE RESIDUE DEPOSITS 19
2.6 LAND USE AFTER RECLAMATION 20
2.7 REGISTER FOR GOLD MINE RESIDUE DEPOSITS 21
2.7.1 The use of GIS as a supporting tool for the establishment of a register 21
2.7.2 GIS-based register for gold-mine residue deposits 21
2.7.3 Statistical evaluation of the register 22
2.7.3.1 Classification of gold-mine residue deposits 23
2.7.3.2 Spatial distribution of gold-mine residue deposits 25
2.7.3.3 Geological conditions beneath gold-mine residue deposits 26
2.7.3.4 Land use in close proximity to gold-mine residue deposits 27

CHAPTER 3 – GEOHYDROLOGY OF THE UNSATURATED AND SATURATED ZONES 30
3.1 INTRODUCTION 30
3.2 UNSATURATED ZONE 30
3.2.1 Basic concepts for the unsaturated zone 30
3.2.2 Behaviour of a fluid in an unsaturated porous medium 31
3.2.2.1 Capillary forces 32
3.2.2.2 Adsorption forces 33
3.2.3 Specific retention and storage capacity 34
3.2.4 Preferential flow-paths in the unsaturated zone 35
3.2.5 Mass transport in the unsaturated zone 36
3.3 SATURATED ZONE 37
3.3.1 Basic concepts of the saturated zone 37
3.3.2 Hydrologic characterisation of the saturated zone 37
3.3.3 Mass transport in the saturated zone 38
3.3.3.1 Diffusion 38
3.3.3.2 Advection 39
3.3.3.3 Dispersion 40

CHAPTER 4 – ENVIRONMENTAL HYDROGEOCHEMISTRY 42
4.1 INTRODUCTION 42
4.2 BASIC HYDROGEOCHEMICAL PROCESSES IN THE SUBSURFACE 44
4.2.1 The equilibrium concept and deviation from equilibrium 45
4.2.2 Kinetic approach 47
4.2.3 Precipitation and dissolution reactions 49
4.2.4 Ion exchange and sorption processes 51
4.2.5 Reduction and oxidation processes 54
4.3 THE CONCEPT OF BACKGROUND VALUES 58
4.4 HYDROGEOCHEMICAL PROCESSES WITHIN MINE TAILINGS 59
4.4.1 Introduction 59
4.4.2 Sulphide oxidation and acid generation processes (AMD) 60
4.4.2.1 Primary factors 61
4.4.2.2 Secondary factors 64
4.4.2.3 Tertiary factors 65
4.4.2.4 Downstream factors 66
4.4.3 CHEMISTRY AND MINERALOGY OF GOLD-MINE TAILINGS 67
4.4.3.1 Background – Chemistry and mineralogy of the Witwatersrand reefs 67
4.4.3.2 Mineralogical composition of gold-mine tailings 69
4.4.3.3 Chemical composition of gold-mine tailings 70
4.5 GEOCHEMICAL STABILITY OF CONTAMINANTS 72
4.5.1 Introduction 72
4.5.2 Geochemical stability 73
4.5.3 Remobilisation of trace elements from gold-mine tailings 75
4.6 TOXICITY 77
4.6.1 Introduction 77
4.6.2 Toxicity of selected contaminants 78
4.6.2.1 Sulphate 78
4.6.2.2 Arsenic 78
4.6.2.3 Cobalt 79

4.6.2.4 Chromium *79*
4.6.2.5 Copper *80*
4.6.2.6 Iron *80*
4.6.2.7 Nickel *80*
4.6.2.8 Manganese *81*
4.6.2.9 Lead *81*
4.6.2.10 Zinc *81*
4.6.2.11 Cyanide *82*
4.6.2.12 Radioactive elements *82*
4.7 ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS FOR THE AQUATIC PATHWAY CAUSED BY AMD AND ASSOCIATED CONTAMINANTS 84
4.7.1 Introduction 84
4.7.2 Impact of AMD and trace elements on the unsaturated and saturated zones 84

CHAPTER 5 – METHODOLOGY 86
5.1 DATA COLLECTION 86
5.1.1 Development of a GIS-linked database for gold-mine tailings dams 87
5.1.2 Field survey 88
5.2 LABORATORY TESTING 88
5.2.1 Extraction tests 89
5.3 DATA EVALUATION 91
5.3.1 Background concentrations 91
5.3.2 Environmental evaluation and classification of case study sites 91
5.3.3 Assessment of the current pollution impact 92
5.3.4 Assessment of the potential future pollution impact 93
5.3.5 Estimation of hydraulic conductivities 95
5.3.6 Description of soil types occurring in the study area 96

CHAPTER 6 – CASE STUDIES 97
6.1 INTRODUCTION 97
6.2 AVAILABLE INFORMATION 98
6.3 REGIONAL SETTING 99
6.3.1 Regional Climate 100
6.4 CASE STUDIES 102
6.4.1 Case study site A 103
6.4.2 Case study site B 107
6.4.3 Case study site C 111
6.4.4 Case study site D 114
6.4.5 Case study site E 119
6.4.6 Case study site F 123
6.4.7 Case study site G 127
6.4.8 Case study site H 131
6.4.9 Case study site I 133
6.4.10 Case study site J 138
6.4.11 Case study site K 142

6.5 SUMMARY OF CONTAMINANT ASSESSMENTS 145
6.5.1 Case study A 145
6.5.2 Case study B 145
6.5.3 Case study C 146
6.5.4 Case study D 146
6.5.5 Case study E 147
6.5.6 Case study F 148
6.5.7 Case study G 149
OTHER SITES 150
6.5.8 Case study H 150
6.5.9 Case study I 150
6.5.10 Case study J 151
6.5.11 Case study K 152

CHAPTER 7 – IMPACT ASSESSMENT 153
7.1 INTRODUCTION 153
7.2 CHARACTERISATION OF THE PRIMARY POLLUTION SOURCE 154
7.3 CURRENT POLLUTION IMPACT ON THE SUBSURFACE 155
7.3.1 Unsaturated zone (vadose zone) 155
7.3.2 Saturated zone (groundwater system) 163
7.3.2.1 Regional groundwater quality 163
7.3.2.2 Groundwater quality in the study area 164
7.4 FUTURE POLLUTION IMPACT POTENTIAL ON THE SUBSURFACE 165
7.4.1 Impact on the unsaturated zone 165
7.4.2 Impact on the saturated zone 167

CHAPTER 8 – PRELIMINARY REHABILITATION MANAGEMENT 169
8.1 INTRODUCTION 169
8.2 REHABILITATION OPTIONS FOR CONTAMINATED SOILS 171
8.2.1 Treatment technologies 172
8.2.2 On-site management 174
8.2.2.1 Vegetation cover for reclaimed sites 176
8.3 REMEDIATION OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATED BY AMD AND ASSOCIATED CONTAMINANTS 177
8.4 LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR LARGE-SCALE CONTAMINATED SITES 178
8.5 MONITORING AS INTEGRAL PART OF REHABILITATION MANAGEMENT 180
8.6 RISK ASSESSMENT 180

CHAPTER 9 – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 183
9.1 DISCUSSION 183
9.2 CONCLUSIONS 184
9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS 188

CHAPTER 10 – LIST OF REFERENCES 190

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 : Parameters and Source Information Captured in the GIS-linked database 22
Table 2.2 : Statistical Parameters of Gold Mine Residue Deposits and Reclaimed sites 22
Table 2.3 : Classification of Gold Mine Residue Deposits with regard to the covered area size 23
Table 2.4 : Summary of the Frequency of Gold Mine Deposits 24
Table 2.5 : Geological conditions under gold mine residue deposits 25
Table 3.1 : Typical values of some properties of common clay minerals 33
Table 4.1 : Important processes as sources of different ions and processes that may limit the concentration of ions in fresh water 42
Table 4.2 : Solubility products of common minerals in the aqueous phase 49
Table 4.3 : Selected elements that can occur in more than one oxidation state in groundwater systems 52
Table 4.4 : Redox classification for different chemical environments 53
Table 4.5 : Mean analytical values for significant minerals and uranium present in Vaal Reef and VCR samples 66
Table 4.6 : Trace element contents of pyrites of the Black Reef formation 67
Table 4.7 : Summary of statistics for major element concentrations contained in tailings samples 68
Table 4.8 : Summary of statistics for trace elements concentrations contained in tailings samples 70
Table 4.9 : Relative mobilities of elements in sediments and soils as a function of Eh and pH 75
Table 5.1 : Summary of laboratory tests, the number of samples and the method applied 86
Table 5.2 : Extractable NH_4NO_3 threshold values for soils 88
Table 5.3 : Average background values in top soils obtained from the Vryheid Formation and Malmani Subgroup 89
Table 5.4 : Recommended maximum NH_4NO_3 extractable threshold concentrations that should not be exceeded in the soil 90
Table 5.5 : Pollutant enrichment classes by using the geochemical load index 92
Table 5.6 : Average range for the abundance of selected trace elements in soils 92
Table 5.7 : Comparison of tables of the Unified Soil Classification Classes and related Hydraulic Conductivity 93
Table 6.1 : Important features of the selected case study sites 98
Table 6.2 : The average monthly rainfall and maximum 24-hour rainfall and evaporation for the Johannesburg Area 100
Table 6.3 : Average monthly maximum and minimum temperatures for the Johannesburg Area 101
Table 6.4 : Seepage analysis showing the macro-chemistry at Site D 118
Table 6.5 : Seepage analysis showing the micro-chemistry at Site D 119
Table 6.6 : Groundwater quality at Site F 127
Table 6.7 : Seepage analysis showing the macro-chemistry at Site G 130
Table 6.8 : Seepage analysis showing the micro-chemistry at Site G 130
Table 6.9 : Macro-chemistry of a groundwater sample obtained at Site H 133
Table 6.10: Heavy metal concentration ranges in pH values at Site I 137
Table 6.11: Average values for selected water quality parameter at Site J 139

Table 6.12: Average trace element concentrations at Site J 140
Table 6.13: Surface water quality with increasing distances downstream of Site J 140
Table 6.14: Summary of statistics for trace element concentrations contained in soil and sediment samples in close proximity to Site J 141
Table 7.1 : Statistical parameters of the bio-availability of trace elements 154
Table 7.2 : Threshold exceedance ratios of soil samples obtained from Site F 155
Table 7.3 : Trace element mobility and main statistical parameters in soil samples obtained from Site F 156
Table 7.4 : Calculated geochemical load indexes for various trace elements 166

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 : Photograph of a partly reclaimed tailings dam in the East Rand area 15
Figure 2.2 : Typical layout of a tailings dam 16
Figure 2.3 : Position of the phreatic surface in a tailings dam during operation and after decommission 17
Figure 2.4 : Distribution of frequencies with regard to *Class A* gold mines tailings dam 23
Figure 2.5 : Spatial distribution of gold mine residue deposits related to provinces and covered land size 25
Figure 2.6 : Mine residue deposit distribution according to geological strata classification 27
Figure 2.7 : Land use in close proximity to gold mine residue deposits 28
Figure 2.8 : Satellite image of the Johannesburg area 29
Figure 4.1 : Schematic overview of processes affecting water quality in the hydrological cycle 42
Figure 4.2 : The concept of equilibrium and kinetics 47
Figure 4.3 : Schematic description of various sorption processes 50
Figure 4.4 : Distribution of heavy metals over various sorption phases in the soil 51
Figure 4.5 : Sequence of reduction processes with increasing depth in the unsaturated and saturated zones 54
Figure 4.6 : Mineral distribution in gold mine tailings 68
Figure 4.7 : Eh – pH fields for some common aquatic environments 73
Figure 4.8 : Eh – pH stability relationships between ion oxides, sulphates and carbonates in the aqueous phase 73
Figure 5.1 : Estimation of saturated hydraulic conductivity in a fine-grained soil 93
Figure 6.1 : Map of South Africa indicating the study area 99
Figure 6.2 : Locality map of the case study sites south of Johannesburg 102
Figure 7.1 : Conceptual model of the pollution source and the affected subsurface 153
Figure 7.2 : Relation between soil depth and soil pH in the study area 157
Figure 7.3 : Ni mobility as a function of pH 158
Figure 7.4 : Cr mobility as a function of pH 158
Figure 7.5 : Cu mobility as a function of pH 159
Figure 7.6 : Fe mobility as a function of pH 159
Figure 7.7 : Co mobility as a function of pH 160
Figure 7.8 : Pb mobility as a function of pH 160

Figure 7.9 : U mobility as a function of pH 160
Figure 7.10: Zn mobility as a function of pH 160
Figure 7.11: As concentration in soils as a function of depth 162
Figure 7.12: Zn concentration in soils as a function of depth 162
Figure 8.1 : Association between the master variables, the major element cycles and contaminants 179
Figure 8.2 : Stages in a risk assessment procedure 181

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Geotechnical profiles, geotechnical and geochemical descriptions
Appendix B: Summary of geochemical analyses, background values for Vryheid Formation, correlation matrices for the tailings and soil analyses
Appendix C: Mineralogical analyses of mine residue samples
Appendix D: Register for mine residue deposits in South Africa
Appendix E: Maps with all mine residue deposits of the register
Appendix F: Site photographs 1-12

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABV	Average background value
AEC	Anion Exchange Capacity
Alk	Alkalinity
AMD	Acid mine drainage
AVG	Average (mean value)
CEC	Cation exchange capacity
CL	Crisis limit
EC	Electrical conductivity
EMP	Environmental management plan
EMPR	Environmental management plan report
ICP-MS	Induced coupled plasma mass spectrometer
K	Hydraulic conductivity (m/s)
LOI	Loss on ignition
MAX	Maximum value
mg/l / mg/kg	1 mg/kg = 1/1000 g/kg (10^{-6} g/l)
MIN	Minimum value
MOB	Mobility in % (bio-availability)
n	Population of samples
n. a.	Information not available
n/d	Not detectable
NAPL	Non aqueous phase liquids
NGDB	National Groundwater Database, RSA
nm	Nano metre (10^{-9} m)
NTP	Normal temperature and pressure
P&T	Pump-and-treat approach
PI	Plasticity index
QA/QC	Quality control/quality assessment
RDP	Reconstruction and development program
RML	Recommended maximum limit
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAR	Sodium adsorption ratio
STDEV	Standard deviation
TC	Threshold concentration
TCLP	Toxic characteristic leaching procedure
TDS	Total dissolved solids
TER	Threshold exceedance ration
µg/l	1 µg/l = 1/1000 mg/l (10^{-9} g/l)
XRD	X-ray diffraction analysis
XRF	X-ray fluorescence analyses

Government Departments, institutions and consulting firms

ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
DME	Department of Minerals and Energy, RSA
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, RSA
NRC	National Research Council, USA