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## TABLE OF CONTENT

COMMITTEE .....	ii
PREFACE .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	vii
 <b>LIST OF PAPPER</b>	
Bioconcentration Factor of Copper (Cu), Lead (Pb), Mangan (Mn), and Total Iron (Fe total) in Hydropsyche Sp. (Trichoptera) At The Watershed of River Ledok Salatiga <b>A. Ign. Kristijanto</b> .....	1
Gravity Changes of Jakarta City on 2008 - 2010 <b>Agus Setyawan<sup>a</sup>, Yoichi Fukuda<sup>b</sup>, Jun Nishijima<sup>c</sup> and Takahito Kazama<sup>b</sup></b> .....	6
Bioconversion of Agriculture Biomass Into Fermenting Sugars Using Compost Thermophiles and Lignocellulosic Extracellular of Thermophilic Consortium <b>Agustina L. N. Aminin<sup>a</sup>, Melly Wahyuningsih, Jenriany, Fitria Lukitasari, Rani Trisnawati, Purbowatiningrum R. Sarjono, Nies S. Mulyani</b> .....	11
Adsorption of Phosphate Ion on Modified Natural Zeolite <b>Ahmad Suseno<sup>1</sup>, Gunawan<sup>2</sup>, Eko Hanudin<sup>3</sup>, Eko Setia Budi<sup>4</sup></b> .....	16
System Identification and Temperature Control Design of An Mosquito Box Process Using Microcontroller Experimentally <b>Ainie Khuriati, Tony Yulianto, Ibnu Sulistiono</b> .....	20
Mutation on Biofilm Formation Affect Colonization of <i>Bacillus amyloliquefaciens</i> FZB42 on The Roots of <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> <b>Anto Budiharjo<sup>1</sup>, Rainer Borris<sup>2</sup>, Fan Ben<sup>3</sup></b> .....	25
Pb and Cd Distribution in Biotic and Abiotic Components of Receiving Industrial Waste Water Shallow Lake <b>Awalina-Satya, Tjandra Chrismadha and Fachmijany Sulawesty</b> .....	32
Morphological Study of Bacterial Cellulose (BC) /Polyvinil Alcohol (PVA) Nanocomposite as Bone Scaffold <b>A.Z. Abidin<sup>a</sup>, U. Sukandar<sup>a</sup>, H.P.R.Graha<sup>a</sup>, F.Ahmad<sup>a</sup></b> .....	41
Development of 2D Isodose Curve from the PDD and Dose Profiles Using Matlab <b>Choirul Anam<sup>a</sup></b> .....	48
Application of Capillary Electrophoresis Method for Drug Analysis <b>Dadan Hermawan<sup>a,b</sup>, Khaulah Ab Rahim<sup>a</sup>, Wan Aini Wan Ibrahim<sup>a</sup>, Mohd Marsin Sanagi<sup>a</sup></b> .....	53
Preparation Preliminary Study of Biodegradable Plastics Based of Cassava Compounds With Additives Limonene Extraction of Orange Leather <b>Deddy Kurniawan Wikanta, Fahmi Arifan, Nailul Izzah</b> .....	58
Encapsulation of $\beta$ -Carotene In Nanocapsules Based on Coconut Phospholipids <b>D. Hudiyanti<sup>a</sup>, P. Siahaan<sup>b</sup></b> .....	63

*Preparation of Analgesic Cream Made from Acothina fulica  
Slime and the Effectiveness for Wound Healing of Mice*

<b>Dwi Surya Atmaja, Supto A Wibowo, Muhamad Arsyad, Noor Afifah, Agustina L N Aminin and Nies S Mulyani*</b> .....	<b>66</b>
Development of Chikungunya Virus Spread Model in Human Populations <b>Dyah Mugi Sayekti<sup>a</sup>, Kartono<sup>b</sup>, R. Heru Tjahjana<sup>c</sup></b> .....	<b>69</b>
<i>Epidemiologic Study on Nutrition and Management Related Diseases in Feeding Cattle Agricultural By-products</i> <b>E. Kusumanti, Widiyanto and Mulyono</b> .....	<b>76</b>
Diversity of Mosses In Ecotourism Region of Penggaron, Central Java <b>Eka Mulyani<sup>a</sup>, Lilih Khotim Perwati<sup>b</sup></b> .....	<b>80</b>
Synthesis of 2',4'-Dihidroxy-3,4-Dimethoxychalcone From Vanillin By Claisen-Schmidt Condensation <b>Elfi Susanti VH<sup>a</sup>, Tri Redjeki<sup>b</sup>, Sabirin Matsjeh<sup>c</sup>, Tutik Dwi Wahyuningsih<sup>d</sup>, Mustofa<sup>e</sup></b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>The Potency of Palm Oil Mill Effluent As A Raw Material For Liquid Fertilizer</b> <b><sup>1</sup>Elfidiah, <sup>2</sup>Dedik B., <sup>3</sup>Faizal <sup>2</sup>Salni</b> .....	<b>88</b>
Effectivity of Antioxidant in Local Cultivar Sweet Potatoes ( <i>Ipomoea batatas</i> (L.) Lam.) on Total Cholesterol and Triglycerides Level of Blood Serum in Hyperlipidemic Rats ( <i>Rattus norvegicus</i> Berkenhout, 1769.) <b>Endah Sri Palupi<sup>a</sup>, Mulyati-Sarto<sup>b</sup> and Rarastoeti Pratiwi<sup>c</sup></b> .....	<b>94</b>
Effect of Concentration Variation of Stearic Acid And KOH on Making And Characterization Of Emulsion With Coconut Oil As Raw Materials <b>Eni Widiyati<sup>a</sup>, AH. Bambang Setiaji<sup>b</sup>, Suharto Eka Totok<sup>c</sup>, Triyanto<sup>d</sup></b> .....	<b>99</b>
Case Studies of Decrease in Crop Stevia ( <i>Stevia rebaudiana</i> Bertoni) at Tawangmangu Region, Karanganyar Regency <b>Erma Prihastanti*, Ayu Anintia Yuhana Rahman*, Nur Rochmah Septa Triyana*, Edi Purnomo*, Elisabeth Rani*, Ermita Br Tarigan*, Evi Risky Amelia*, Fauziatul*</b> .....	<b>105</b>
3-Methylbutanal have been identified in ethanol extract of <i>Clitoria ternatea</i> flower from Jakarta <b>Erni E.<sup>a</sup>, Ahmad R.H.U.<sup>b</sup>, Arleni<sup>c</sup>, Elza I.A.<sup>d</sup>,</b> .....	<b>111</b>
Study of Ethnobotany for Bioconservation Medical Plant (Zingiberaceae) <b>Erry Wiryani, Lilih Khotim Perwati, Murningsih.</b> .....	<b>113</b>
Evaluation of CRS-STACK Method Applied on Real Seismic Data of East Java, Line "Z01" <b>Galih C. Kusuma<sup>1</sup>, Teguh Suroso<sup>2</sup>, Agus Setyawan<sup>3</sup></b> .....	<b>118</b>
Deposition of ZnO Thin Films by Spray Coating Technique for Photocatalytic and Photochemical Degradation of Methylene Blue <b>Heri Sutanto, Iis Nurhasanah, Eko Hidayanto</b> .....	<b>122</b>
Alternative Solutions for Mathematical Models which Use	

Two-Points Boundary Value Problem <b>R. Heru Tjahjana</b> .....	127
The Inovation Production of Curcuminoid Powder As Alternative Medicine To Prevent Cancer With Granulation Method <b>Ikha Setya A, Frisca Biansha Y, Heny Kusumayanti, Dwi Handayani</b> .....	130
Effect of Concentration of NaOH Solution on the Synthesis of Mesoporous Zeolites Using Klaten Natural Zeolite as Raw Material <b>Ilham Salim<sup>a</sup>, Wega Trisunaryanti<sup>b</sup>, Triyono<sup>c</sup>, Yateman Arryanto<sup>d</sup></b> .....	134
Fractionation and Characterization of Liquid Smoke Components of The Pyrolysis Coconut Shell Result <b>John Z. Lombok<sup>a</sup>, Bambang Setiaji<sup>b</sup>, Wega Trisunaryanti<sup>b</sup>, Karna Wijaya<sup>b</sup></b> .....	139
The Aplication of Plasma Technology As Nutrient Source for The <i>Porphyridium</i> Growth <b>Kenanga Sari; Tri Retnaningsih Soeprbowati; Muhammad Nur</b> .....	146
<i>The Quality Improvement of Mathematics Learning Using PBL Model Based on Web</i> <b>L. Wulandari ***) , Widowati **), I. Junaedi *)</b> .....	152
Toxic Effect of Mercuronitrate (HgNo3) on Viscera Organs of River Fish <b>Lilis Suryani<sup>1)</sup>, Arinafril<sup>2)</sup>, Faisal<sup>2)</sup>, Rasyid Ridho<sup>3)</sup></b> .....	158
Toxicity of Nitrogen Industry Wastewater on Microalgae <i>Chlorella pyrenoidasa, Nannochloropsis sp. And Bacteria Pseudomonas fluorescens</i> <b>Marhaini<sup>1)</sup>, M. Faizal<sup>2)</sup>, M. H. Dahlan<sup>2)</sup>, Arinafril<sup>2)</sup>, Marsi<sup>2)</sup></b> .....	163
Effect of The extract of Purwoceng ( <i>Pimpinella alpina</i> ) Molk on Increasing cGMP level of Male <i>Sprague Dawley</i> <b>Meiny Suzery<sup>1</sup>, Taufiqurachman<sup>2</sup>, Ign Riwanto<sup>3</sup>, Susilo Wibowo<sup>4</sup></b> .....	171
Development of Utilization Method of Biomass to Convert Into Furfural With The Environmental Insight In Order to Provide Chemical Raw Materials In Indonesia <b>Mitarlis, Tukiran, Dian Novita</b> .....	175
The Chromium (Cr) Content In Water And In The Tissue of Swimming Blue Crabs ( <i>Portunus pelagicus</i> . Lin) In Barackishwater Pond Around Babon River Estuary of Semarang Coastal Areas, Trimulyo Village, Districk In Central Java Indonesia <b>Nanik Heru Suprpti</b> .....	180
<i>Photodegradation of An Hazardous Organic Compound 2,4,6- Trichlorophenol By Using Synthesized TiO2 Nanoparticle</i> <b>Nor Basid Adiwibawa Prasetya, Abdul Haris, Gunawan</b> .....	185
Relationship Between Students' Knowledge And Attitude Toward Waste Management At Elementary School (Case Study in Musi Banyuasin Regency South Sumatera) <b>Nur'aini<sup>1)</sup>, Sjarkowi<sup>2)</sup>, Waspodo<sup>3)</sup>, Faizal<sup>4)</sup></b> .....	189

<i>Potency of Gewang (Corypha utan Lamk.) In Linamnutu Village, Timor Tengah Selatan Regency, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province</i> <b>Retno Peni Sancayaningsih<sup>1)</sup>, Mega Fitria Maharani<sup>1)</sup>, and Sigit Heru Murti Budi Santosa<sup>2)</sup> .....</b>	<b>196</b>
The Role of <i>Spirulina</i> on The Reducing Heavy Metal Concentration <b>Riche Hariyati &amp; Tri Retnaningsih Soeprbowati .....</b>	<b>201</b>
The Application of Sylvofishery Fattening and Survival Rate Nila ( <i>Oreochromis niloticus</i> ) Upon The Environmental Perception in The North Shore of Semarang City <b>Rini Budihastuti<sup>1)</sup>, Sutrisno Anggoro<sup>2)</sup>, Suradi Ws<sup>2)</sup> .....</b>	<b>205</b>
Removal of Lead from Contaminated Sandy Soil by Using EAPR System <b>Rudy Syah Putra<sup>1,2*)</sup> and Shunitz Tanaka<sup>2)</sup> .....</b>	<b>211</b>
Community Structure of Bryofauna in Different Altitude Zones of Ungaran Mountain: Biodiversity Study Related to Climate Change Effect <b>Rully Rahadian<sup>a)</sup>, Lilih Khotimperwati<sup>b)</sup>, Karyadi Baskoro<sup>c)</sup> .....</b>	<b>216</b>
Mechanical and Thermal Properties of Bacterial Cellulose Fibre-Reinforced Mater-Bi Bionanocomposite <b>Saharman Gea<sup>a)</sup>, Basuki Wirjosentono<sup>a)</sup>, Emiliano Bilotti<sup>b)</sup> and Ton Peijs<sup>b)</sup> .....</b>	<b>220</b>
Water and Sediments Characteristics Influencing Fish Farming Activities: Univariate and Multivariate Approaches <b>Sapto P. Putro and Jeremy Robertson .....</b>	<b>225</b>
Survival of <i>S. thermophilus</i> and <i>L. bulgaricus</i> In Extracts of Selected Tropical Fruits Growing In Central Java <b>S.B.M. Abduh, Y.B. Pramono, A.N. Albaarri*, S. Mulyani, A. M. Legowo.....</b>	<b>233</b>
Diversity of Ground Predatory Arthropods In Organic and Conventional Rice Farming <b>Shinta Ariani, Rully Rahadian, Mochammad Hadi.....</b>	<b>237</b>
The Potential of Tofu Dregs Filtrate as A Material of Probiotic Soygurt <b>Sigit Kartasanjaya<sup>1)</sup>, Muryati<sup>1)</sup>, Nilawati<sup>1)</sup>, Ais Lestari Kusumawardhani<sup>1)</sup>, Aniek Yuniati Sisworo<sup>1)</sup>, Agustina L Nurul Aminin<sup>2*)</sup> .....</b>	<b>242</b>
Ion Selective Electrodes As Analytical Tools For Rapid Analysis of Soil Nutrients <b>Siswoyo, Zulfikar and Asnawati .....</b>	<b>247</b>
Reactive Oxygen Intermediates (ROIs) On Mice Macrophage Administered With Methanol Fraction Of <i>Spirulina platensis</i> and Challenge With Tachyzoite <b>Sorta Basar Ida Simanjuntak<sup>a)</sup>*, Sukarti Moeljopawiro<sup>b)</sup>, Wayan Tunas Artama<sup>c)</sup>, Subagus Wahyuono<sup>d)</sup>.....</b>	<b>251</b>
Undergrowth Community Structure at Forest Area Nglimut Gonoharjo Kendal <b>Sri Utami<sup>a)</sup>, Murningsih<sup>b)</sup> .....</b>	<b>257</b>
The Evaluation of The Square Equivalent Field 10x10 cm <sup>2</sup> in The	

6 MV Photon by using Monte Carlo Simulation SusiYami Rahayuningsih <sup>a</sup> , Wahyu Setiabudi <sup>b</sup> , Choirul Anam <sup>c</sup> .....	261
Inventory of Potential Terrestrial Ferns For Medicinal Plants in Gonoharjo Ecotourism, Limbangan, Kendal Teguh Tri Hatmoko <sup>a</sup> , Sri Utami <sup>b</sup> , Murningsih <sup>c</sup> .....	266
Use of Duckweed ( <i>Lemna perpusilla</i> Torr.) for Natural Feed and Fitoremedial Agent in Aquaculture: Profit Improvement and Sustainability Enhancement Tjandra Chrismadha, Fachmijani Sulawesty, Awalina, Yayah Mardiaty, Endang Mulyana, Mey Ristanti Widoretno.....	269
The Potential Used of Microalgae for Heavy Metals Remediation Tri Retnaningsih Soeprbowati, Riche Hariyati .....	274
The Effect of Bacterial Cellulose Matrix to The Osteoinductivity Property of Composite Bacterial Cellulose – Hydroxyapatite Tri Windarti and Parsaoran Siahaan .....	279
Water-Based Crystallization and Formulation of Stevioside from <i>Stevia rebaudiana</i> (Bert.) As Natural Sweetener With Antidiabetic Activity Yohanes Martono, Fandi Ade Darmawan, November Ratuaminu, Dewi K.A.K.H .....	284
Probiotic effect on male reproductive health of local duct ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> ) Yulia Sistina <sup>a*</sup> , Hendro Pramono <sup>a</sup> , Dadan Mulyadi Saleh <sup>b</sup> , and Ismoyowati <sup>b</sup> .....	291
Biosorption Of Zn <sup>2+</sup> With <i>Nannochloropsis salina</i> Yusafir Hala <sup>a)</sup> , M. Syahrul <sup>a)</sup> , Emma Suryati <sup>b)</sup> , Paulina Taba <sup>a)</sup> .....	295
Business Intelligence Systems for High Performance Management Mustafid .....	300

# The Role of *Spirulina* On The Reducing Heavy Metal Concentration

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## ABSTRACT

The heavy metal released to the environment has resulted many problems for aquatic ecosystems, which in turn will influence human health. Cyanobacteria had known able to accumulate heavy metals since Cyanobacteria are high tolerance and able to live in the extreme condition. Simultaneously, Cyanobacteria were very sensitive to the heavy metals pollution. One of Cyanobacteria is *Spirulina*, a microalgae as source of food for primary consumer in the marine ecosystem. This research was conducted in order to find out the potential use of *Spirulina* to remediate heavy metals of lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd) and copper (Cu). On the experimental research, 0.5 mg heavy metals were added to the 1 L *Spirulina* culture. The *Spirulina* population was counted every day for 14 days. The concentration of initial and 14 days heavy metals concentration in the *Spirulina* culture were measured. The highest population of *Spirulina* under Pb treatment was in the day of 8, however under treatment of Cu dan Cd, was occurred in the day of 12. In the concentration of 0.5 mg Pb, Cu, and Cd, the population growth were higher than control, means that the addition of heavy metals had induce population growth. Therefore, research is still required to continue to find out the maximum growth on the maximum heavy metals.

Keywords: *Spirulina*, heavy metals, bioremediation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Spirulina* is a planktonic photosynthetic filamentous cyanobacterium that forms massive populations in tropical and subtropical water bodies which have high levels of carbonate. *Spirulina* has been studied for single cell protein<sup>[1]</sup>, vitamins, minerals, proteins and polyunsaturated fatty acids: gamma-linolenic acid<sup>[2]</sup>, therapeutic properties<sup>[3]</sup>, antioxidant activity<sup>[4]</sup>.

*Spirulina* can be found in many freshwater environments, including ponds, lakes, and rivers. It thrives best under pesticide-free conditions with sunlight and moderate temperature levels, but it is also highly adaptable, surviving even in extreme conditions. Microalgae are microscopic. Marine microalgae, called phytoplankton, are the base of the ocean food web. *Spirulina* is often deemed the most nutritionally complete of all food supplements, containing a rich supply of many important nutrients, including protein, complex carbohydrates, iron, and vitamins A, K, and B complex. It also has a high supply of carotenoids such as beta carotene and yellow xanthophylls which have antioxidant compound. It is also rich in chlorophyll, fatty, nucleic acids, and lipids. Thus, *Spirulina* has countless uses as a supplement for maintaining good health and for preventing diseases.

*Spirulina* contains rich vegetable protein (60~ 63 %, 3~4 times higher than fish or beef ), multi Vitamins (Vitamin B 12 is 3~4 times higher than animal liver), which is particularly lacking in a vegetarian diet. It contains a wide range of minerals (including Iron, Potassium, Magnesium Sodium, Phosphorus, Calcium etc.), a high volume of Beta- carotene which protects cells (5 time more than carrots, 40 time more than spinach), high volumes of gamma-Linolein acid (which can reduce cholesterol and prevent heart disease). Further, *Spirulina* contains phycocyanin which can only be found in *Spirulina*.

Effluents containing metal emerged from various electroplating, tanning, pesticide and nuclear reactor and they are present as ionic species, inorganic or organic complexes or associated with collides and suspended particulate materials. These metals cannot be degraded once released into the environment and it is an increasing problem for waste water treatment. The release of heavy metals from industries into the environment has resulted in many problems for both human health and aquatic ecosystems. Algae in metal containing localities tend to concentrate metal from ambient water and pass them to higher tropic level. They form the base of the food chain and their primary productivity depends upon maintaining the level of available metal ion at a concentration between toxicity and deficiency. Accumulation of trace metals in the food chain has been considered as a major environmental hazard<sup>[5]</sup>.

Being important in primary production the study of toxic effects of metal pollutant on algae is important. Utilization of phytoplanktonic algae with a high potential to adsorb heavy metals for the removal of residual metals from waste water resulting in high quality reusable efficient water and valuable biomass that could be used for different purpose. Algal biotreatment of industrial effluents be an improved integrated high rate algal ponding system in successive stages by the cultivation of filamentous forms of algae can be utilized successfully for the heavy metal removal <sup>[6]</sup>.

Cyanobacteria are characterized by high tolerance and can exist in various extreme conditions: in hot springs, in snow, in water rich in salts, etc. Simultaneously, they are very sensitive to the pollution by heavy metals <sup>[6]</sup>.

One of the organism is known to have the potential for algal biosorption microscopic size or microalgae. From various studies note that different species of microalgae, especially from among the green algae (Chlorophyte), brown algae (Phaeophyte), and red algae (Rhodophyte) either alive (living cells) or in the form of dead cells (biomass) and biomass mobilization for ions adsorb metal. Algae alive utilized as a bioindicator of heavy metal pollution in the aquatic environment whereas in the form of algal biomass and mobilize biomass used as biosorben (biological material absorbing heavy metals) in wastewater treatment <sup>[7]</sup>.

*Spirulina* are known to accumulate heavy metals from industrial effluents. These oxygen-evolving organisms quickly respond and adapt to stress conditions in general and heavy metals in particular <sup>[6]</sup>. They have developed natural methods of resistance towards heavy metals, viz., and a reduction in metal intake by extracellular sequestration, localization / compartmentalization inside the cell or energy-dependent efflux One of the vast and various alga groups are cyanobacteria and *Spirulina* is one of them. A possibility to use *Spirulina* dry biomass for remediation of sewage waters from cadmium is shown by <sup>[8]</sup>.

Growth of *Spirulina* such as environmental factors light, temperature, salinity, pH, and nutrient use (carbon, nitrogen, sulfur, and phosphorus). Light has a great influence on the chemical composition of algal photosynthesis. Generally decrease in intensity of light will increase the chlorophyll a and other pigments (chlorophyll b, chlorophyll c, fikobilliprotein, and carotenoids), while high-intensity light will degrade chlorophyll a and other pigments <sup>[9]</sup>.

Temperature is one of the factors that influence the biochemical composition of algae. Temperature effect on membrane lipid composition and content. The reduced temperature growth under optimal conditions increase the unsaturated fatty acids in membrane systems. Increased stability and fluidity of cell membranes especially the thylakoid membrane (increase of unsaturated fatty acids in membrane lipids) protects photosynthesis from fotoinhibisi at low temperature <sup>[9]</sup>.

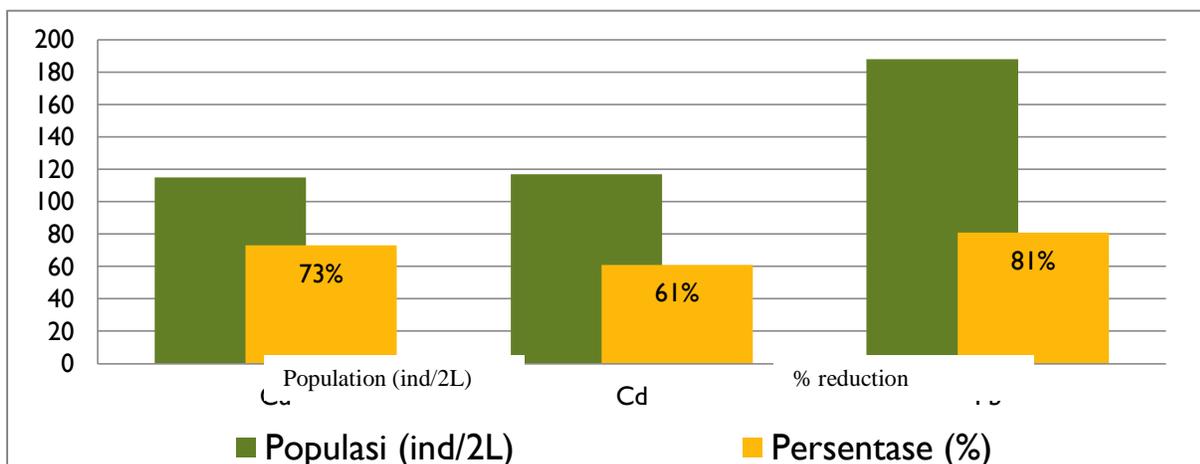
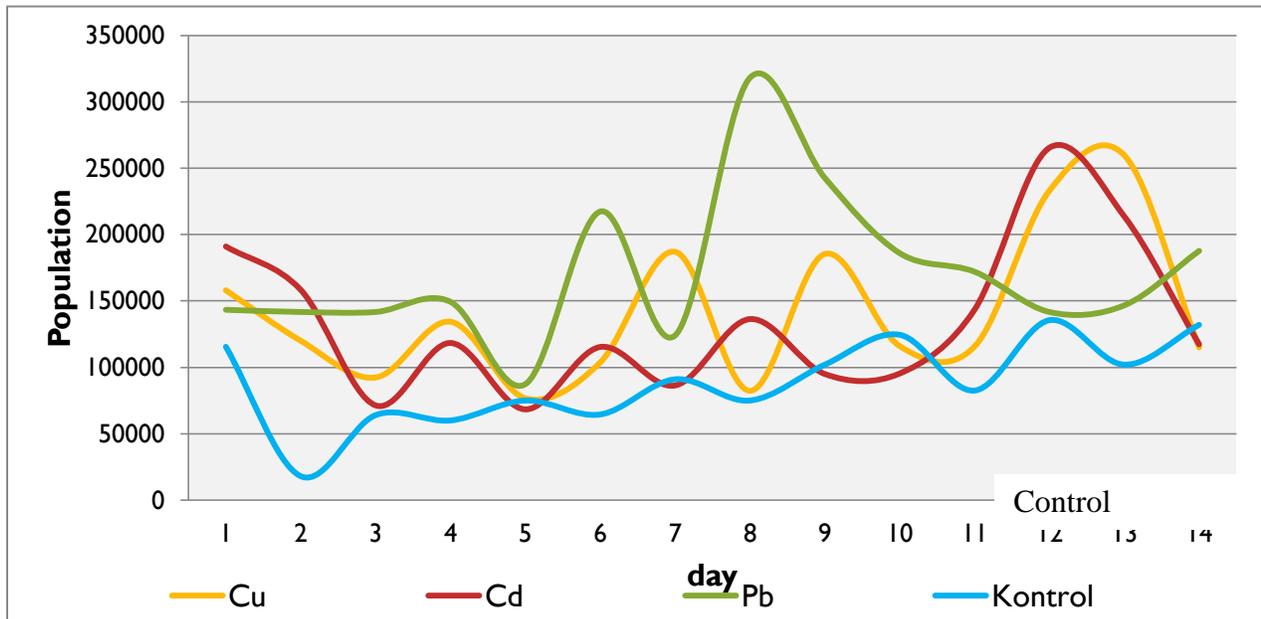
*Spirulina* can survive in the range of salinity 0.5 to 2 times the concentration of sea water <sup>[10]</sup>. In conditions of salinity less than 3.5%, microalgae not compete live with other microalgae when grown in open culture. Salinity of 4.6% does not inhibit the growth process. Nevertheless, with a range of 3.5-4.5% salinity can stimulate optimal growth <sup>[9]</sup>. *Spirulina* takes the form of nutrient and micronutrient makronutrient. Examples of macro nutrients for its growth are organic compounds such as N, K, MG, S, P and CL. While the micro nutrients are Fe, Cu, Zn, Mn, B . Each nutrient has specific functions for the growth and density of organisms without neglecting the influence of the environment.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research requires vessel volume 3L, Pasteur pipette, hand counters, glass objects, microscopes, pH meters, hand refraktometer, slides - glass cover, and SRC. Preparation consists of several stages, sterilization and medium cultivation, preparation of sea water as a cultivation medium for microalgae, preparation of inoculant, fertilizer cultivation and aeration equipment. All equipments to be used are sterilized first. Sterilization is intended to eliminate or minimize the presence of microorganisms or substances bullies on tools and cultivation media that will be used during the study. The medium used is water with a salinity of 28 ppt. *Spirulina* were taken from stock cultures BPPBAP Jepara and the metal used is Cu, Cd and Pb with a concentration of 0.5 ppm, and a vessel with no treatment as a control. The composition of the equipment carried in a closed room and the light comes from fluorescent lamp. Parameters observed during the study include: (1) Abundance of cells every day for 14 days in the main study.(2) additional parameters including temperature (°C), salinity (ppt), and pH of the water in the cultivation medium.

### 3. RESULT

From the results of the study showed that the administration with heavy metals in the culture of heavy metal Pb *Spirulina* has the highest rate of absorbance compared with other types of heavy metals, ie by 81%. As for the Cd *Spirulina* can absorb up to 73% and 61% Cu. Heavy metal lead (Pb) may toxic due to bioaccumulation of the system, ie an increase in the concentration of chemical elements in the body of living things that cannot be degraded by the body, and toxicity properties (poison) in living organisms even at relatively low concentrations. In addition the lead (Pb) in the bloodstream and the brain can cause blood hemoglobin synthesis disorders, neurological disorders (nervous system), disorder of the kidneys, reproductive system, acute or chronic disease of the nervous system, and impaired lung function. Besides the accumulation of lead (Pb) in the body also can lower IQ, especially in young children. Some types of algae can absorb Pb, one of which is *Chlorella* sp. Lead (Pb) is absorbed can be taken and refined into metallic Lead (Pb) through a certain process.



### 4. DISCUSSION

Algae can be used as bioindicator of heavy metal pollution in the aquatic environment while the algal biomass in the form of biomass and used as biological material absorbing heavy metals in wastewater treatment. In general, the use of algae as bioindicator and biosorben. Algae have a high enough capacity to adsorb heavy metals because the algae are functional groups that can perform the binding of the metal ion. The functional groups, especially carboxyl, hydroxyl, amine, sulfudril, imadazol, sulfate and sulfonate present in the cytoplasm of the cell wall. *Spirulina platensis* play an important role in the environmental fate of toxic

metals and metalloids with physico-chemical and biological mechanisms effecting transformations between soluble and insoluble phases. Such mechanisms are important components of natural processes being of potential application to the treatment of contaminated materials. This study led to the conclusion that *Spirulina platensis* rapid cadmium adsorption rate and made them well suited for the removal of cadmium in wastewater. In addition, living cells of *Spirulina platensis* were found to have high tolerance to cadmium and can be regarded as an attractive adsorbate option for the biosorption of heavy metal contaminant. Thus *Spirulina platensis* biomass is suitable for fast remediation of industrial waste waters contain cadmium by the way of biosorption. The binding of the metal ion to the cell wall compounds is the possible mechanism behind the surface adsorption of the metal ion. Capsular material or extracellular polysaccharide found in Cyanobacteria carry sulphonated (SO<sub>3</sub>) and carboxyl (COO<sup>-</sup>) charge and promote ionic and electrostatic binding of the carboxylic and uronic acid moieties with the positively charged cation<sup>[6]</sup>. Studies on the mechanism of uptake of cadmium in *Spirulina platensis* cell have clearly indicated the metal ion on the surface. Adsorption of the cadmium was about 67% on the cell surface.

Rangsayatorn *et al.*<sup>[8]</sup> reported that cadmium was rapidly adsorbed by *S. platensis* during the first 5 min and by *C. Regularis* within 6 min, respectively. Such rapid uptake of heavy metals by living cells is very significant when the cells are used in bioremediation process. Jayant Doke *et al.* (2004) reported that Ni was removed up to 57% and Pb up to 97% the total bacterial count was reduced up to 75% in the growth period of eight days by using *Spirulina* sp.<sup>[9]</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Concentration of 0.5 ppm heavy metals Cu, Cd, and Pb were added to the culture of *Spirulina* sp, did not inhibit the rate of growth and the average number of the highest population in the culture of *Spirulina* sp found in cultures treated with the addition of Pb metal. *Spirulina* sp seen from the test data of heavy metals, the most effective has the ability to absorb heavy metals Pb, namely by 81%.

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