

光热材料-木材太阳能驱动界面蒸发器研究进展

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摘要:【目的】通过研究太阳能驱动界面蒸发技术,更好地实现该技术在解决淡水资源短缺方面的应用。【进展】总结太阳能界面蒸发技术的工作原理、光热材料、蒸发器基体等;概括光热材料-木材蒸发器的结构设计;着重综述使用碳基材料、金属纳米材料、半导体、有机聚合物等光热材料结合木材的蒸发器的系列研究结果。【前景】认为太阳能界面蒸发器可以充分利用光能,是一种替代传统海水淡化获取清洁淡水的很有前途的方法;碳基材料、金属纳米材料、半导体和有机聚合物是常用的高效光热转换光热材料;利用木材本身的优异性能进行结构与功能设计,可以改善水传输效率低及耐久性差等不足;基于光热材料-木材的太阳能界面蒸发技术,为制备纯净水和解决淡水资源匮乏问题提供了新思路。建议不断研发新型光热转换材料,以获得高光热转换效率的多功能性木材基太阳能蒸发器,并降低材料的制备成本以及制备难度;进一步研究并明确传热和传质机制,控制木材的多孔网络以匹配水的相变和蒸汽扩散的速率;尝试将小木块组装成大木板蒸发器,以提高蒸发器的可扩展性。

关键词: 光热转换; 木材; 太阳能; 界面蒸发; 木材基蒸发器

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太阳能是地球上最主要的能量来源,每年太阳照射到地球上的总辐射量大约为 3.4×10^6 EJ,相当于全球年总能耗的 7 500 多倍^[1]。水是生命之源,尽管地球的总水量相当大,但淡水数量只占 2.5%,并且全世界近 40 亿人口每年至少 1 个月需要面对十分严重的水资源短缺情况,因此,充分利用丰富的太阳能,有效开发利用海水补充淡水资源已成为必然趋势^[2]。

太阳能驱动界面蒸发是近年来发展起来的一种十分有前景的低能耗淡水生产技术^[3]。该技术是将光能转化为热能,在界面处加热水分子以产生蒸汽,冷凝后产生淡水的技术^[4]。太阳能驱动界面蒸发技术可以从海水、咸水或污水中生产清洁的淡水,具有节能环保、低成本以及规模可调节等优点,应用前景十分广阔^[5]。

木材作为一种天然的环保多孔材料,具有来源广泛、种类丰富、导热系数低等优点,已成为太阳能驱动界面蒸发技术的理想基体材料之一。通过对木材表面涂覆光热转换粉体材料或改性,可以制备出性能良好的蒸发器^[6]。随着先进纳米技术和材料科学的快速发展,各种光热材料已被设计成具有高效光吸收能力的功能性纳米结构^[7]。为了增强蒸发器的光热转换和蒸发性能,光热纳米粉体材料可以设计为由单个组分或多个组分组成,并且涉及多种光热转化机制。

本文中首先概述了太阳能界面蒸发技术的原理、用于蒸发器的光热转换粉体材料和木材基体以及结构设计,然后从木材结合碳基材料、金属基材料、半导体、有机聚合物等方面综述了光热材料-木材蒸发器的研究进展,最后分析了该领域发展面临的挑战和未来发展方向。

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1 太阳能界面蒸发技术

近年来,随着纳米材料的不断发展,为了解决传统太阳能体相蒸发模式的能量利用率低的问题,人们逐渐提出并改进了新型的太阳能驱动界面蒸发技术。置于装置表面的光热材料可以有效收集太阳光并转换为热量,为水蒸发提供能量,装置内部的多孔基体材料在传输水的同时,依靠自身优异的隔热性能,极大地减少热量的损失,从而实现水的高效蒸发。与传统的海水淡化技术相比,该技术在蒸发效率、清洁能源利用、环境友好等方面具有优势,因此,太阳能驱动界面蒸发技术是解决淡水资源短缺的一种很有前途的方法^[8]。

1.1 工作原理

太阳能驱动界面蒸发的整个工作过程如图1所示,主要包括:1)入射阳光被蒸发器的吸光层吸收并转换为热量;2)在毛细力作用下,水从蒸发器基体的底端输送至吸光层;3)吸光层加热蒸发表面的水分子并产生蒸汽;4)蒸汽蒸发冷凝后流向集水槽,实现淡水的收集。

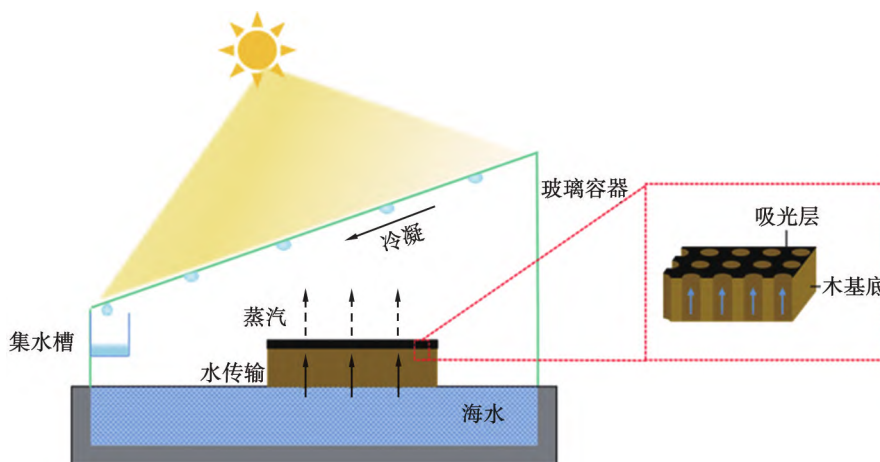


图1 太阳能驱动界面蒸发的工作原理

Fig.1 Schematic diagram of solar-driven interfacial evaporation

典型的太阳能驱动界面蒸发体系通常由吸光材料、基体、水体、入射太阳光、水蒸汽冷凝及收集装置等部分组成(见图1),其中由基体和光热转换材料组成的蒸发体是最主要的部分。在整个太阳光谱范围内实现高效光热转换是迈向高性能太阳能驱动界面蒸发的第1步,为此需要选择合适的光热材料。此外,基体部分主要担负系统水输送和隔热2个关键功能,对提高太阳能驱动界面蒸发性能有着十分重要的影响。

1.2 光热材料

光热材料是一种可以高效地吸收太阳能,从而将太阳能转换为热量的粉末状物质^[9]。置于蒸发装置表面的光热材料应拥有良好的光吸收性能,可以高效地吸收太阳能,并释放出足够的热量,从而使装置表面的温度急剧升高^[10]。目前,研究较多的光热材料主要有金属纳米材料、半导体、碳基材料和有机聚合物等^[11]。

当入射光的振动频率与金属电子的振荡频率相匹配时,光会引发金属纳米材料中电子的基体振荡,从而产生热电子,随后热电子又与入射光形成的电磁场产生共振,从而生成热能^[12],典型的金属纳米材料有 Au、Cu、Ag^[12-14]等。Huang 等^[12]使用具有纳米钻孔结构的金纳米材料设计了一种新型等离子体吸收器,通过在单个纳米粒子水平上合理调节其各向异性,使金纳米结构在整个太阳光谱上表现出良好的光吸收能力,效率为 92.9%。Zhu 等^[15]制备出包括 Ag-Au 双金属合金和碳纳米材料的复合流体,光热转化效率分别比单金属纳米流体提高了 1.94% 和 4%。

半导体的光热转换是电子-空穴对的形成和弛豫的结果,因种类繁多、成本低廉、易功能化等优

点,被广泛地应用到光热转换领域,典型的半导体材料有 TiO_2 、 CuS 等^[16-18]。例如,Zada 等^[17]研制出具有随机尺寸分布的黑色 $\text{TiO}_2(\text{BTiO}_2)$ 膜,经过还原处理的 BTiO_2 具有大量的氧空位、表面紊乱和表面缺陷,在波长为 250~2 500 nm 范围内具有完美的宽带吸收能力,且具有优异的光热效应,使太阳能产生效率达到 77.14%。Cao 等^[19]合成了 CuS -多壁碳纳米管(CuS -multi walled carbon nanotube, CuS -MWCNT)复合材料,并制备了光热转换膜,该膜可以加速水向蒸汽的转化,使蒸发效率达到 95.0%。

碳基材料主要包括活性炭、碳纳米管、石墨烯类等,利用分子热振动将太阳能转化成热能^[20-23]。该类材料来源广泛,制作成本较低,对光的吸收率较高,因此被广泛应用于太阳能驱动界面蒸发领域^[24]。例如,Li 等^[22]采用氧化石墨烯和聚乙烯醇磷酸酯聚合物,通过水热还原法制备了一种超吸水性的三维气凝胶。石墨烯高效吸收太阳光,转化为热量并将其限制在蒸发层,聚乙烯醇磷酸酯高效地进行水传输,从而使该蒸发器的能量利用效率达 124.8%,在 1 倍太阳光照强度($100 \text{ mW} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$)下的蒸发速率高达 $4.89 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。Mnoyan 等^[25]通过使用简单的过滤和喷涂方法,利用低成本材料活性炭制备了高效的光热转换层,光热转换效率到达 85.66%。

有机聚合物材料的高灵活性、易成型性、生物相容性、稳定性等特征都是无机材料不具备的,是光热材料的更为优异的选择之一^[26]。不仅如此,该材料的制备方式简单,价格低廉,光吸收效率高,在光热利用研究中得到了广泛的应用。例如,He 等^[27]在聚合物多孔泡沫表面进行聚吡咯(polypyrrole, PPy)的界面聚合,构建了以 Fe_3O_4 -PPy 二元光学系统为光吸收层、以聚合物多孔泡沫为多孔基底的蒸发器,在该蒸发器太阳能转换过程中 PPy 表现出了优异的光吸收能力,效率为 92%。

在上述光热材料中,金属纳米材料、半导体和有机聚合物通常能够显著提高蒸发器表面的光热转换性能,但存在着原料成本较高、稳定性一般等缺点。碳基材料虽然光热转换性能略低,但具有原料成本较低、光热性能稳定等优势,是目前研究最多的吸光材料。

1.3 蒸发器基体

在太阳能驱动界面蒸发系统中,除了光热材料外,基体材料的选择也十分重要。基体不仅起到系统内运输水分的作用,还应具备优异的隔热能力以防止系统内热量的散失,因此对材料内部空隙的排列与大小及其自身的亲疏水性有严格的要求。一般来说,材料的水运输能力和隔热能力并不是相对独立的 2 种因素,二者会相互影响。具有良好隔热能力的材料,导热系数会偏小,且材料的孔隙结构也会对其隔热性能有一定的影响,因此,需要调控材料的水传输能力和隔热性能,使整个系统发挥最优效果。在蒸发过程中,基体材料应有效控制输入的水分,使其可以与光热转换材料所生成的热量相匹配,从而使水分和热量之间形成一种动态平衡,在热量消耗完全的同时水分也刚好全部蒸发。

目前,已经有许多材料(聚氨酯、聚苯乙烯、纤维素凝胶、木材等^[28])被选为基体材料,这类材料均具有亲水、隔热、多孔隙等优点。例如,纤维素泡沫不仅具有优异的水传输能力和隔热能力,还可以促进系统内水分的快速蒸发^[29];天然木材也因自身优异的孔径分布以及隔热性能用于太阳能界面蒸发的基体材料^[30],主要原因包括:1)木材的构造中拥有由天然导管和筛管组成的孔隙结构,具备良好的水输送能力;2)通过简单的表面改性后,木材可以具备优异的光吸收和光热转换能力;3)木材作为一种储备丰富的可再生资源,自身具有良好的亲水性、水输送能力和导热系数低等特点。

木细胞由 3 种主要成分组成,分别为纤维素($(\text{C}_6\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_5)_n$)、半纤维素(由戊糖和己糖为单元构成的带有支链的聚合物)和木质素(苯基丙烷为单元的聚合物),它们相互交织,提供了必要的机械完整性^[31]。木材的亲水性表面非常适合通过毛细作用将水输送到受热温度较高的区域,即将水分从蒸发器的低端输送到顶部热层。木材中含量丰富的羟基可以与水形成氢键,从而降低水分的蒸发焓,但过强的亲水性会导致水分在蒸发器顶部堆积,造成不必要的热损失,导致蒸发效率降低以及盐积累等问题,因此,通常通过控制木材的高度调控水分的运输速率和蒸发速率,或通过提升木材表面的疏水性限制水的渗透^[32-34]。

天然木材中丰富的孔隙结构有助于提高蒸发器的储水能力,一般可提升至 100%~170%,是一种优良的储水和水传输介质^[35]。此外,木材的多孔结构和低密度可以使其漂浮在水面上,使木材基太阳能蒸发器实现自漂浮功能^[36]。木材内部的空隙结构主要包括轴向系统和径向系统两类,其中轴向系统负

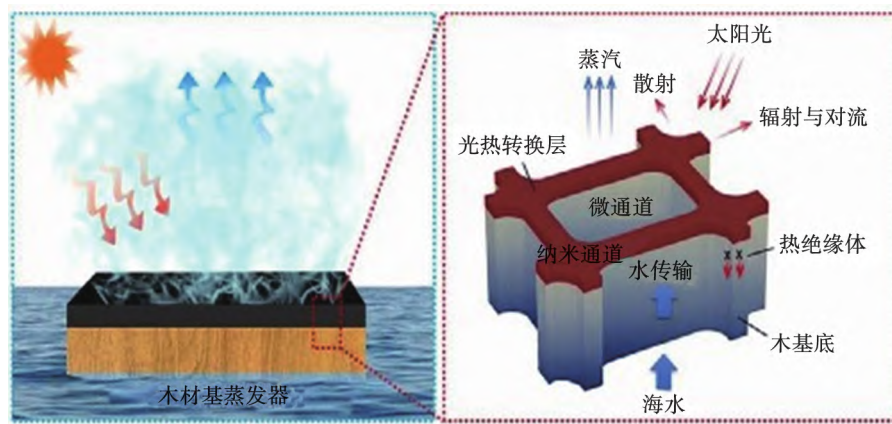
责在树干中上下输送水分,而径向系统则负责从树干到树皮的水分运输。这2个系统构成了一个具有许多微通道和纳米通道的分级多孔网络,有利于水分的扩散^[37]。在这些孔隙结构的毛细管力驱动下,自由水可以沿着木纤维细胞或管胞在生长方向上移动或在交叉运输路径中沿着纹孔和木射线移动,因此,利用上述水输送系统,可以将大量水连续泵送到木材蒸发器的蒸发表面^[38]。

木材是一种隔热材料,其导热系数与木材密度呈线性正相关^[36],且木材自身的形态结构特征使其具有独特的各向异性导热系数^[39]。为实现高效的太阳能海水淡化,需要降低整个系统的热损失。相比于传统的二维界面蒸发,使用三维木材蒸发器可以将热量局限在蒸发界面,从而减少向水体中的热量损失。此外,三维设计的木材蒸发器可以通过构造较冷的蒸发界面,从环境中获取热量,减少了自然对流和环境辐射等引起的热量散失^[40],因此,通过木材蒸发器的合理设计,可以充分利用其隔热性能和环境能量,是一种十分有应用前景的材料。

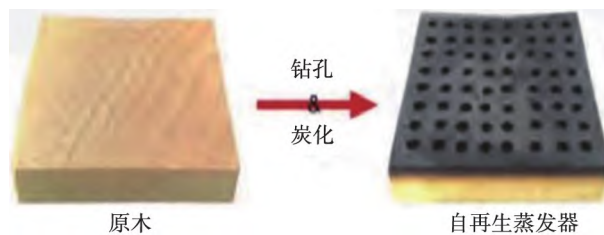
2 光热材料-木材蒸发器结构设计

木材具有优异的多孔结构、超亲水性、高强度质量比和隔热性能良好等优点,是太阳能驱动界面蒸发系统的理想基底之一。基于木材的蒸发器在太阳能驱动界面蒸发的过程、成本、能源效率和环境可持续性等方面均展现出了巨大的潜力^[41]。目前,从木质膜到木块,从实心木到木颗粒或木纤维,各种类型的木材基蒸发器均得到了迅速发展^[36]。

图2所示为典型的光热材料-木材蒸发器原理示意图。木材基蒸发器通常由光热转换层和基底构成,见图2(a)。顶层主要是由光热材料组成的光热转换层,起到光吸收和光热转换的作用;底层由木块构成,具有支撑光热材料、将水输送到蒸发器表面和防止热量向水体传导等作用。木质基底由大量的微纳米通道构成,通过毛细力作用输送水分^[36]。在阳光照射下,除小部分光被散射外,大部分光均被光热材料转化为热能。粗糙的蒸发器表面可以减少光散射,从而提升蒸发器的光吸收效率^[42]。此外,针对材料和热结构的设计可以将水传导、对流和辐射造成的热损失降至最低^[43]。



(a) 双层木材蒸发器^[36]



(b) 自再生木材蒸发器^[47]

图2 典型光热材料-木材蒸发器示意图

Fig.2 Schematic diagrams of typical photothermal material-wood evaporators

通过结构设计,可以改变木材蒸发器中光热界面和水蒸汽运输位置,使其性能发生变化,进而提升蒸发性能^[44]。例如, Ghafurian 等^[45]设计了一种下层木材、中层脱木质素木材和上层铁-铅纳米颗粒构成的三层木材基蒸发器,在3倍太阳光照强度($300 \text{ mW} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$)下的蒸发速率达到 $3.28 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。Gan 等^[46]在木材基底上涂覆一层纳米纤维,再沉积 Fe_3O_4 纳米颗粒,并通过外部磁铁的驱动使纳米纤维形成一种具有高表面积和光吸收能力的三维花状结构,该蒸发器在1倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发速率为 $1.39 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。这些研究为组装性能优异的木材蒸发器提供了新思路,但其工艺复杂和结构稳定性仍然是应用过程需要解决的主要问题。

蒸发器的2个表面一般都是亲水的,能够产生毛细作用,提高水传输效率,然而,过高的亲水性会导致上表层形成较厚的水膜,不仅导致热损失增加,还在生成蒸汽的过程中产生盐结晶,从而降低蒸发器的蒸发效率。Kuang 等^[47]为了提高防止盐结晶性能,开发了一种包含排盐装置的新型太阳能界面蒸发器,即在碳化后木材基底上钻孔,从而得到一种实时自再生蒸发器,见图2(b)。在太阳能海水淡化过程中,钻孔孔道和木材孔道之间的盐浓度梯度作为快速盐交换的途径,使得孔道中的盐分被重新分布,因此,在连续太阳能蒸发海水淡化的过程中,与天然木材孔道相比,钻孔孔道具有较高水力传导率,进而产生更高的盐稀释速度,这是防止蒸发器中盐积聚的关键。

3 光热转换粉体材料结合木材的太阳能界面蒸发器

光热转换能力是影响太阳能界面蒸发效率的关键因素之一,较高的光热转换效率可以促进更多蒸汽的产生^[48]。木材自身的光吸收主要依靠木质素,所以其吸光率远低于其他光热材料^[49]。为提高木材基蒸发器的光热转换效率,在其表面涂覆一层光热转换材料是一种有效的方法。这些材料一般呈黑色,具有较高的光吸收性,如介孔3D石墨烯^[50]、煤沥青碳点^[51]、 WO_{3-x} 纳米棒^[42]等光热材料在木材基蒸发器的实验中均表现出优异的光转换效率。除此之外,石墨、蜡烛烟灰纳米颗粒、墨汁等材料^[52-53],虽然其效果相对较差,但因具有成本低、制备简单、可扩展的优点,也成为研究热点。

3.1 碳基材料与木材复合

木材表面炭化是形成光热转换层的一种简单高效的方法,主要包括表面加热、火焰煅烧和激光处理等^[54]。木材表面的炭化程度、炭层结构以及炭化厚度均对炭化木材蒸发器的性能有显著影响^[42]。例如,Zhu 等^[38]对美国椴木表面进行简单的表面炭化,形成独特的双层结构,在整个太阳光谱上的吸收率高达99%,当处于10倍太阳光强时,蒸发效率达到80.4%。

木材表面负载光热转换粉体材料也能够提升蒸发器的光热转换效率。例如,田杰等^[55]以三聚氰胺泡沫为3D支撑体,石墨烯-氧化石墨烯复合纳米片为前躯体,制得3D石墨烯-还原氧化石墨烯-碳泡沫。该蒸发器在1倍太阳光照强度下的光吸收率可达96.6%,蒸发速率为 $1.54 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。

图3所示为典型的碳基材料-木材蒸发器的制备原理示意图。Chao 等^[56]将脱除木质素的木棉科轻木与木质素衍生的碳量子点结合在一起,设计了一种具有生态和经济优势的新型光热蒸发系统,见图3(a),蒸发速率为 $1.18 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。该系统利用天然木材中低曲折度的管孔结构与优异的各向异性导热系数的独特性质,将脱木素处理后的木材作为太阳能蒸发体系基底;同时为了实现木质组分的全内循环利用,通过一锅法将脱除的木质素经过简单的化学改性进行自组装,成功制备了具有一定光热转换效率的木质素基衍生碳量子点,并原位修饰至脱木素木材内,实现了全木组分的高效循环利用。

Hu 等^[57]将石蜡火焰不完全燃烧的碳纳米颗粒原位沉积在松木表面,制得一种新型双层太阳能蒸发器,见图3(b)。该蒸发器在1倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发速率达到 $2.06 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$,光热转换效率达到90%,且长期稳定性好,自洁能力强,具有良好的抗酸碱能力。

3.2 金属纳米材料与木材复合

Aziznezhad 等^[58]将碱土金属掺杂 VO_2 纳米粒子作为高效光热材料涂覆在杨木上,用于太阳能蒸发,在1倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发效率达到93.45%,且在3倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发速率最高达到 $5.26 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。

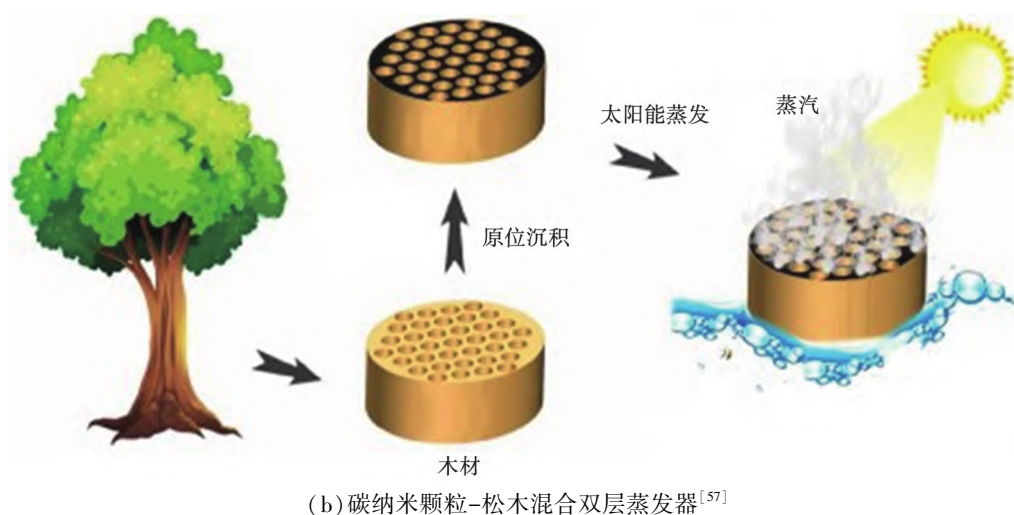
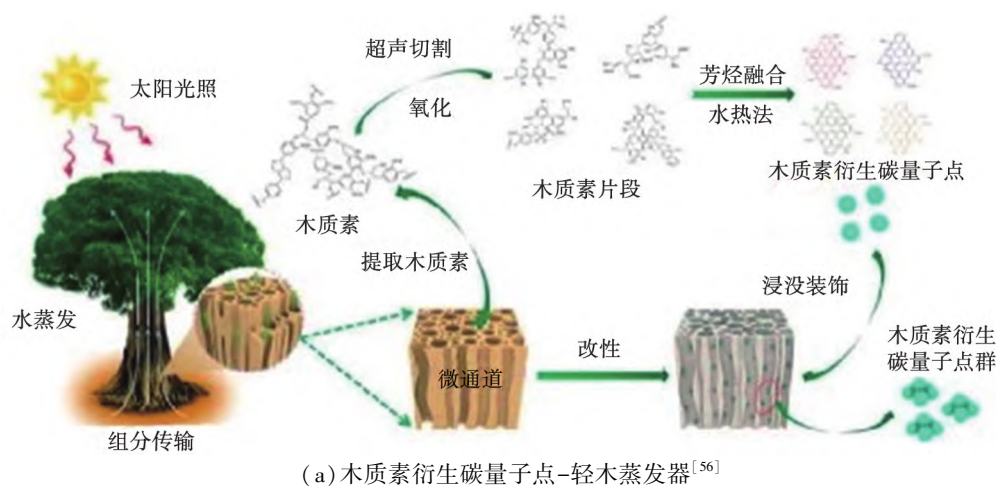
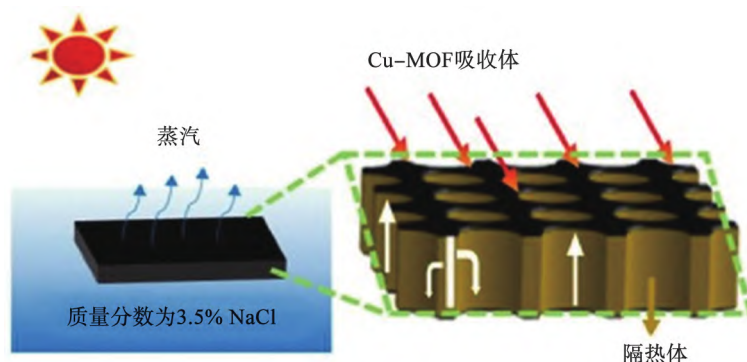


图3 典型碳基材料-木材蒸发器示意图

Fig.3 Schematic diagrams of typical carbon-wood evaporators

Zhu 等^[59]将铜基金属有机框架材料(copper-based metal organic framework, Cu-MOF)涂覆在天然巴尔沙木表面形成木材蒸发器, Cu-MOF 层紧密地附着在木材的顶部和底部表面, 见图4。低导热率的木质基材负责连续输水, 顶面的黑色 Cu-MOF 提供了宽带和强光吸收, 而水下亲水 Cu-MOF 层则具有高亲水性。通过优化木材厚度改善了其蒸发效率, 当木材厚度为 10 mm 时, 该蒸发器的蒸发效率达到 $1.80 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ 。

图4 Cu-MOF-木材蒸发器示意图^[59]Fig.4 Schematic illustration of Cu-MOF-wood evaporator^[59]

3.3 半导体与木材复合

Song 等^[60]提出了一种上层疏水、下层亲水的木材蒸发器,见图5。首先用 NaClO_2 脱除椴木中的木质素,以提高其润湿性和热性能,随后在木材表面涂覆一层很薄的 Fe_3O_4 作为光热转换材料;同时为了提高木材和半导体之间的亲和力,在吸收层中加入了聚乙烯醇分子 (polyvinyl alcohol, PVA)。在 20 ℃ 和 60% 相对湿度的条件下,该蒸发器在 1 倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发速率为 $1.3 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$,光热转换效率为 73%。

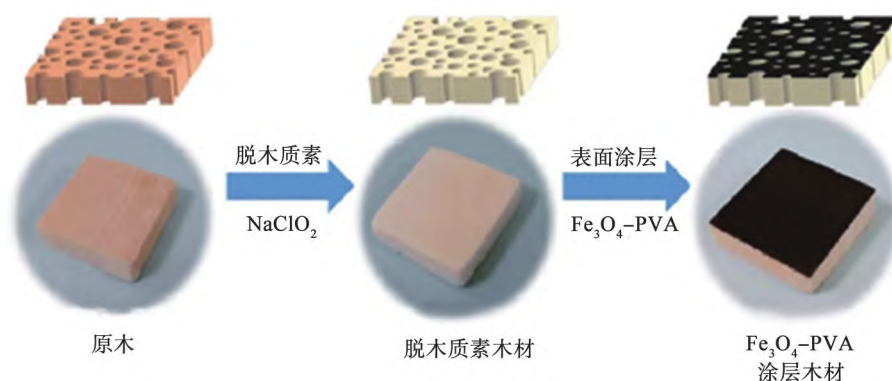


图5 Fe_3O_4 -PVA 涂层木材蒸发器的设计示意图^[60]

Fig.5 Schematic illustration of the evaporation fabrication using Fe_3O_4 -PVA coated wood^[60]

He 等^[61]将各种木材浸泡在单宁酸溶液中制得改性木材 (Wood-TA), 然后再浸入 $\text{Fe}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ 溶液中制得 Wood-TA- Fe^{3+} 。该方法所制得的 Wood-TA- Fe^{3+} 蒸发器在 1 倍太阳光照强度下的蒸发速率达到 $1.85 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$, 且具有优异的稳定性和抗原油污染能力, 在海水淡化中具有很好的应用前景。

3.4 有机聚合物与木材复合

Zou 等^[62]开发了一种精氨酸掺杂聚多巴胺和樟木相结合的复合材料,具有可生物降解和可持续发展的优点,具有十分广泛的应用前景。该木材蒸发器具有优异的吸水性和透水性,在 1 倍太阳光照强度下的蒸汽产生效率约为 77%,且能够进行持久的蒸发 (100 h)。

Wang 等^[63]通过吡咯在木材表面的原位聚合,开发了一种具有深色涂层的木材基太阳能界面蒸发装置,见图6。黑色 PPy 的负载显著提高了木材的光吸收能力,使蒸发器从紫外线到近红外区域 (波长为 300~2 500 nm) 的宽波长范围内具有较高的吸收效率 (>90%),在 1 倍太阳光照强度下的蒸汽产生效率约为 72.5%。



图6 PPy 涂层木材蒸发器示意图^[63]

Fig.6 Schematic illustration of PPy coated wood evaporator^[63]

将不同的光热转换粉体材料负载到木材上,实现了太阳能界面的高效蒸发,为绿色环保、性能优异的木材基蒸发器提供了新思路,但这些蒸发器的稳定性、对微生物的易感性以及简化制备工艺仍然是后续研究和应用过程中需要解决的主要问题。

4 结论与展望

本文中综述了太阳能界面蒸发技术及光热材料-木材蒸发器的研究现状,分析了不同光热材料结合木材的蒸发器的结构设计和性能。

1) 太阳能驱动的界面蒸发可以充分利用太阳能,通过光热装换,对海水、咸水、再生水等进行界面蒸发,是一种替代传统加热获取清洁淡水的很有前途的方法。

2) 选择合适的光热材料进行高效光热转换是高性能太阳能驱动界面蒸发的关键之一,碳基材料、金属纳米材料、半导体和有机聚合物是常用的光热材料。

3) 利用木材本身的优异性能进行结构与功能设计,不仅保留了其良好输水性能和较低导热系数等优点,还改善了其吸光率低及耐久性差等不足,进一步提升了太阳能界面蒸发器的性能,例如:对木材表面进行改性使其额外具备高效的宽带光吸收和光热转换性能;将木材与各种光热材料结合,提高了其对太阳光的吸收与转换效率,进而提升蒸发效率;在木材基底钻孔可以提高其防盐结晶能力,有利于稳定长久使用。

4) 基于光热材料-木材的太阳能界面蒸发技术的研究,为生产洁净水和解决淡水资源匮乏问题提供了新的思路,而且木材的来源广,获取成本低,十分适合制造蒸发器,从而节约成本,便于太阳能界面蒸发技术的普及与推广。

木材基太阳能界面蒸发系统还处于实验室研究阶段,在实际开发和应用中仍存在问题。例如,木材表面光热涂层复杂的制备工艺、高昂的成本以及高能耗问题,均会影响木材基蒸发器推广与使用;与其他材料的蒸发器相比,目前的木材基蒸发器的蒸发速率和效率仍然较低;木材的某些预处理方法,如热处理、脱木素处理等,仅限于小尺寸的木块,不利于木材基蒸发器的推广与使用。

在今后的木材功能性研发及应用于太阳能界面蒸发过程中,应通过多种方式进一步改善蒸发器的各项性能。

1) 针对木材光吸收效率低、负载吸光材料成本高的问题,应不断研发新型光热转换材料,降低材料的制备成本以及制备难度,以获得高光热转换效率的多功能性木材基太阳能蒸发器。

2) 造成蒸发速率低的原因一是相变过程中液态水的等效蒸发焓较高,二是热辐射和热传导造成的热量损失占用了部分光热转化的热量。为了提高蒸汽产生效率,可以调控木材蒸发器的结构(孔隙率、孔径分布和曲折度),进一步研究并明确其传热和传质机制,还可以控制木材的多孔网络以匹配水的相变和蒸汽扩散的速率。

3) 针对蒸发器的实用性问题,应尝试将小木块组装成大木板蒸发器,以提高蒸发器的可扩展性。横向组织(如凹坑和射线薄壁组织)可以通过垂直路径将水泵送到生长方向,使用木材的横截面作为蒸发界面,以提高其实用性。

利益冲突声明 (Conflict of Interests)

所有作者声明不存在利益冲突。

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作者贡献 (Author's Contributions)

潘琪、李静、闫良国参与了论文的写作和修改。所有作者均阅读并同意了最终稿件的提交。

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Research progress of photothermal material-wood evaporators for solar-driven interfacial evaporation

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Abstract:

Significance As the best inexhaustible, renewable and eco-friendly energy source of solar and the severe challenge of water resources shortage, fully utilizing the abundant solar energy and seawater to supplement the world's freshwater resources has become an inevitable development trend. Solar-driven interfacial evaporation has attracted enormous scientific and technical interest. It can make full use of sunlight to obtain clean and fresh water, which is a promising alternative to traditional desalination. A solar-driven interfacial evaporation system usually comprises photothermal material, substrate, water body, incident sunlight, vapor condensation and collection device, among which the evaporator composed of the photothermal material and substrate is the most critical part.

Progress In a typical solar-driven interfacial evaporation system (Fig.1), the top layer of photothermal materials enables sunlight to thermal conversion under solar radiation. In contrast, the bottom layer of the substrate supports fluid movement and has low thermal energy loss. The water molecules evaporate at the top surface to steam and then condense to fresh water. Compared with traditional photothermal distillation, this interfacial evaporation technology can significantly reduce heat loss and acquire high efficiency in producing clean water. It also has advantages in evaporation efficiency, clean energy utilization and environmental friendliness compared to the traditional seawater desalination technology.

With the rapid development of advanced nanotechnology and material science, various photothermal materials, such as metals, semiconductors, carbon-based materials and polymers have been designed into solar interfacial evaporators. It is well known that wood has the advantages of naturally abundant microporous channels, large surface area, low thermal conductivity, good buoyancy, high mechanical strength and cost-effectiveness. Thus, wood is an ideal supporting substrate for fabricating various solar evaporators. In addition, wood-based evaporators have shown great potential in the process, cost, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability of solar-powered interfacial evaporation.

Various types of wood-based materials, from wooden membranes to wooden blocks, from solid wood to wood particles or wood fibers, have been rapidly used in solar evaporators. The evaporation performance and photothermal conversion ability can be improved by rational designing the evaporator structure, such as changing the photothermal interface and vapor transportation position. Wood-based evaporators usually comprise a photothermal conversion layer and a substrate (Fig.2(a)). A three-layer wood-based evaporator consisting of a lower layer of wood, a middle layer of delignified wood, and an upper layer of iron-lead nanoparticles has been designed to increase the evaporation rate further. Under three solar light intensities, the evaporation rate reached $3.28 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$.

The top and bottom surfaces of wood evaporators are generally hydrophilic, and their water transfer efficiency can be improved through the capillary action inside the wood. However, the higher hydrophilicity of wood leads to the formation of a thick water film on the upper surface of the evaporator. It not only increases heat loss, but also generates salt crystals during the evaporation process and then reduces the evaporation efficiency. Drilling holes in the carbonized wood substrate to obtain a high-performance self-regenerating evaporator (Fig.2(b)) could increase the evaporation rate and to prevent salt crystallization. The drilled channels with high hydraulic conductivities thus function as salt-rejection pathways, which rapidly exchange the salt with the bulk solution, enabling the real-time self-regeneration of the evaporator.

The absorbance of wood is much lower than that of other photothermal materials. Therefore, it is a very effective method to coat a layer of photothermal powder material on the surface of wood. Then, the top surface of these wood-based evaporators is generally black and has higher light absorption properties. All the widely studied photothermal powder materials of carbon-based materials, metals, semiconductors and polymers can be used. For example, a green evaporation system with ecological and economic advantages has been designed using lignin-derived carbon quantum dots incorporated into delignified wood (Fig.3(a)). The evaporation rate was $1.18 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ under 1 sun ($1 \text{ kW} \cdot \text{m}^{-2}$). A novel bilayer evaporator has been fabricated by in-situ growth of

carbon nanoparticles from incomplete combustion of paraffin candle flame on the wood surface (Fig.3(b)). The resultant bilayer evaporator had a high evaporation rate of $2.06 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$ with the photothermal conversion efficiency of 90% under 1 sun. It also exhibited long-term stability, self-cleaning capability and good anti-acid/base ability. Coating copper-based metal-organic framework (Cu-CAT) on wooden boards to form a wood evaporator (Fig.4) could achieve an evaporation rate of $1.80 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$. It has been reported that a wood evaporator consisted of two layers of a hydrophobic top layer (Fe_3O_4) and a super hydrophilic delignified wood bottom layer (Fig.5). The evaporation rate was $1.3 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$. A bi-layered structure composite for highly efficient solar evaporation was developed based on photothermal-enhanced arginine-doped polydopamine and raw wood. The resulting wood composite had a vapor generation efficiency of 77% on the condition of 1 sun illumination and a long-time evaporation process of 100 h. Another wood evaporator prepared through the in-situ polymerization of polypyrrole (Fig.6) had a higher light absorption efficiency above 90% and a vapor generation efficiency of 72.5%.

Conclusions and Prospects Solar-driven interfacial evaporator can make full use of sunlight, and it is a promising alternative to traditional desalination for obtaining, fresh water. Carbon-based materials, metals, semiconductors and polymers are commonly used as high-efficiency photothermal powder materials. The designed structural and functional wood evaporator utilizing the excellent performance of wood can improve the low water transmission rate, poor durability and other defects. Then the solar-driven interfacial evaporation technology based on photothermal material and wood provides a new idea for clean water collection and solving the shortage of freshwater resources.

To obtain a multi-functional wood-based solar evaporator with high photothermal conversion efficiency, it is suggested that new types of photothermal conversion materials should be continuously synthesized, and the cost and difficulty of the preparation process should be reduced. The heat and mass transfer mechanisms can be further investigated and the porous network of wood is controlled to match the rate of water phase transition and steam diffusion. Finally, assembling small wood blocks into large wood-based evaporators can be encouraged to improve the expansibility of the solar-driven interfacial evaporator.

Keywords: photothermal powder material; wood; solar energy; interfacial evaporation; wood-based evaporator

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