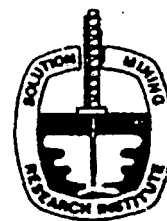


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CAUSAL FACTORS OF SINKHOLE FORMATION

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Introduction

Two sinkholes have been discovered over the perimeter of the Weeks Island Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) Facility; the first in May, 1992, and the second in late February, 1995 (Neal, et al., 1993; and Neal, 1995). These localized subsidence features are likely due to dissolution of salt associated with water leaks into the “Old Morton Salt Mine”, or Old Mine, which comprises the oil storage volume of the Facility. Possible causal factors leading to the development of water leaks into the Old Mine and the related sinkholes are presented and discussed in this paper.

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