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OVERCOMING LEGACY OILFIELD CHALLENGES DURING SALT CAVERN CONSTRUCTION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The Port Barre Salt Dome is surrounded by one of the oldest oilfields in Louisiana. The dome and its surface have been used for timber production, liquid storage, agriculture, and oil and gas production prior to Bobcat Gas Storage developing its gas storage project. Some of these early activities, and their legacy, resulted in landmark environmental litigation and legislation that ultimately continue to shape oil and gas activities in Louisiana to this day.

While extensive environmental studies, along with affected agency consultations, were undertaken during the development process, multiple modifications had to be made to construction plans to accommodate actual conditions encountered during the construction. These included discoveries of leaking production wells, abandoned oilfield pits, buried oilfield wastes and abandoned liquids pipelines. Given the “fast-track” construction approach that Bobcat was undertaking, these issues had to be dealt with rapidly so as not to affect the overall construction schedule.

This paper will explore the history of the salt dome, the steps taken to define the extent of the expected legacy issues and the actual construction and remediation activities that took place.

Key words: Caverns for Gas Storage, Environmental Protection and Regulatory Affairs, History, Louisiana, Regulations, (Regulatory Agencies, Law)

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