Dissolved Solids Encyclopedia Article

Dissolved Solids

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Dissolved Solids

Dissolved solids are minerals in solution, typically measured in **parts per million** (ppm) using an electrical conductance meter calibrated to oven-dried samples. In humid regions, dissolved solids are often the dominant form of **sediment** transport. Solution features such as caverns and **sinkholes** are common in limestone regions.

Water that contains excessive amounts of dissolved solids is unfit for drinking. Drinking water standards typically allow a maximum of 250 ppm, the threshold for tasting sodium chloride; by comparison, ocean water ranges from 33,000–37,000 ppm. **Phosphates** and **nitrates** in solution are the major cause of eutrophication (**nutrient** enrichment resulting in excessive growth of algae). Dissolved solids **buffer acid** precipitation; lakes with low levels are especially vulnerable. High levels occur in **runoff** from newly-disturbed landscapes, such as strip mines and road construction.