

Protecting and Restoring Natural Resources in Washington

Issues

- Washington contains over 3,000 miles of shoreline. Puget Sound is one of the most economically and ecologically important estuarine systems in the United States.
- A large marine shipping industry with potential for oil spills, and existing Superfund sites threaten Washington natural resources. Persistent toxic chemicals contaminate the sediments of many marine and coastal bays, especially in urban areas.
- Over 40 species in the region are listed as federal or state threatened and endangered including Puget Sound Steelhead and Chinook salmon, a cultural icon of the Pacific Northwest. High rates of pollution and habitat loss have contributed to species decline.
- NOAA listed a population of killer whales as endangered under the ESA in 2005. The population now numbers in the 80s. Their decline is likely to continue until NOAA learns more about what needs to be done to reverse the trend. Possible causes are: reduced quantity and quality of prey; persistent pollutants that may cause immune or reproductive dysfunction; oil spills; and disturbance from vessels.

What we do

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) acts as a trustee for natural resources on behalf of the public. DARRP collaborates with federal, state, and tribal entities and also works with cleanup agencies (such as EPA), local organizations, the public, and those responsible for the incident to:

- protect coastal and marine natural resources;
- respond to discharges of oil and hazardous substances;
- assess risks and injuries to natural resources; and
- restore injured natural resources and related socioeconomic benefits.

How we do it

DARRP acts as a trustee for natural resources to:

- work cooperatively with those responsible for the incident;
- develop innovative approaches and techniques for remediation and restoration;



Elliott Bay and Lower Duwamish Waterway, Seattle, WA - see case highlights.

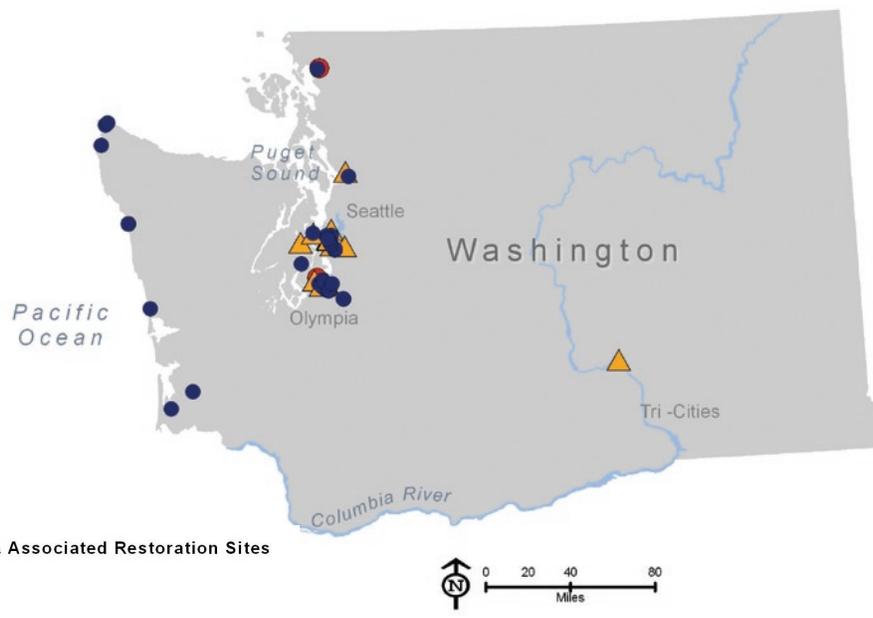
- work with the public to select restoration options to compensate for injuries to natural resources; and
- design and implement or oversee natural resource restoration projects and monitor their success.

DARRP Accomplishments

- Restoration and/or protection of 560 acres of marine habitats, 1,000 acres of freshwater and terrestrial habitats, and 19 stream miles in Washington (completed and planned activities).
- Settlements have resulted in 43 protection and restoration projects in Washington.
- Cleanup actions promote recovery of coastal resources and communities at 22 hazardous waste sites.



Commencement Bay, Tacoma, WA - see case highlights.



Historic and ongoing case highlights

- Whatcom Creek, Bellingham – Replanted 40,000 trees and acquired an additional 12 acres of land to expand the park impacted by a ruptured pipeline that discharged 236,000 gallons of gasoline into Whatcom Creek. The streambed was restored to enhance salmon spawning and 2 wetland projects were constructed.
- Tenyo Maru, Cape Flattery – Acquired and protected over 900 acres of suitable marbled murrelet nesting habitat; identified occupied marbled murrelet sites in nearly 3,000 acres of forested habitat; supported an emergency towing vessel at the Strait of Juan de Fuca to prevent oil spills; developed educational posters and panels for marinas and airports; created and coordinated educational panels for popular Olympic Peninsula trail heads; and conducted a seabird social attraction feasibility study.
- Commencement Bay, Tacoma – Working to evaluate site problems, characterize risk to salmon and other species, develop protective cleanups, and monitor conditions to ensure they improve over time. Settlements with more than 50 responsible parties have been completed to restore injured natural resources. Sixteen projects are completed or underway that will result in over 200 acres restored or preserved (*bottom photo on page 1*) and two culverts replaced to allow fish passage.
- Elliott Bay and Lower Duwamish Waterway, Seattle – Working with partners to evaluate ecological risk, develop protective cleanup actions, evaluate injury to natural resources, and implement restoration from 2 previous settlements. Completed restoration activities include two sediment remediation projects, 1 subtidal enhancement project, 4 intertidal habitat restoration projects, and contribution of funds towards 2 property acquisitions for future habitat restoration (*top photo on page 1*).

For further information about DARRP, please visit
<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov>

