Natural Resource Damage Assessment Regional Restoration Planning Program

Purpose of Regional Restoration Planning

Improve the efficiency of restoration through a proactive and collaborative planning effort

Background

Congress enacted the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) in the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. One year later, Louisiana passed the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1991 (OSPRA). These statutes include provisions for addressing oil pollution and establish liability for substantial threats and unauthorized discharges of oil. A major goal of OPA and OSPRA is to compensate the public for injuries to natural resources and their services as a result of these incidents. Federal, State and other trustees act on behalf of the public to:

- return natural resources and services, as quickly as possible, to the condition they would have been in if the incident had not occurred; and
- obtain compensation for interim losses of such natural resources and service through the restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of equivalent natural resources and/or services.

Role of Natural Resource Trustees

An important role of the federal and state trustees is to restore natural resources held in public trust which have been injured by the release of or threat of release of oil, thereby compensating the public for the lost resources and/or services resulting from the incident.

The Problem

Traditionally, Louisiana's economy has been based on the state's vast natural resources. Both renewable (hunting, fishing, forest products) and nonrenewable (cultural, oil, natural gas) resources are important, and the industries associated with each have coexisted for years. Although Louisiana's oil and gas industry tries to avoid adverse impacts on renewable natural resources, injuries do occur as a result of oil spills. The cumulative impact of these incidents on fish, wildlife and the environment can be significant and adversely affect the industries and communities depending on natural resources for commerce and recreation.

The Solution

The trustees have begun a collaborative process with the public and industry to develop Regional Restoration Plans for the state of Louisiana. Currently, the restoration planning process is conducted on a case-by-case basis. The goal of Regional Restoration Planning is to identify and select feasible restoration projects prior to a spill incident, thereby shortening the damage assessment process, lowering its cost, and restoring lost resources sooner.

The state will be divided into planning regions. For each region, a Regional Restoration Plan will identify suitable restoration projects for restoring natural resources and services. Additionally, each Regional Restoration Plan will provide an opportunity for trustees to pool restoration recoveries from multiple incidents towards larger, more cost-effective, and beneficial restoration projects. Regional Restoration Plans will benefit the public, industry and natural resource trustees by increasing the efficiency of the natural resource damage assessment process.

Photo courtesy of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Participating agencies:

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office,
Office of the Governor
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For more information, please contact:

Karolien Debusschere, Ph.D.
Deputy Coordinator
Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Office of the Governor
tel: 225/219-5800
fax: 225/219-5802
e-mail: loscodeb@linknet.idt.net

OUR OFFICE HAS MOVED TO:
150 Third Street, Suite 405
Baton Rouge, LA 70801