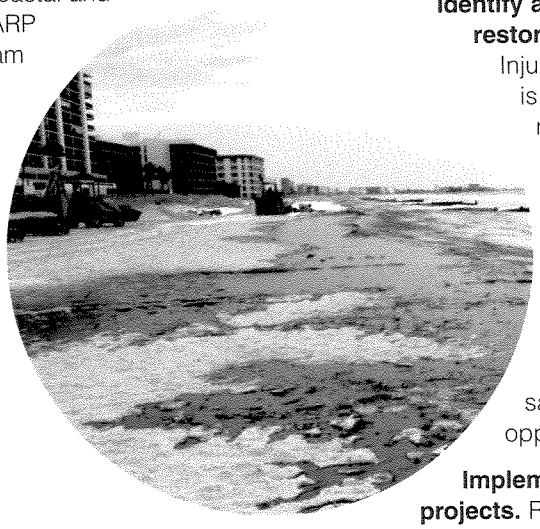
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) acts on behalf of the public as a trustee to manage, protect, and restore coastal and marine resources. The Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (DARP) fulfills NOAA's trustee responsibilities by assessing and restoring resources injured by oil spills or hazardous substance releases. For more than a decade, DARP has provided hands-on experience, leadership, and expertise in assessing and restoring resources such as wetlands, wildlife, salmon, coral reefs, fisheries, and beaches and shoreline.

Why was DARP created?

DARP was created after the 1989 Exxon *Valdez* oil spill to provide permanent expertise within NOAA to assess injuries and restore coastal and marine resources. DARP is a multioffice program that spans the NOAA Ocean Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Office of General Counsel. DARP scientists are located in coastal regions to ensure a quick and knowledgeable response when incidents occur.



What does DARP do?

DARP's multidisciplinary team of scientists, economists, and attorneys works with state, tribal, and other federal trustees to evaluate natural resource injuries, identify restoration options, and implement restoration projects.

Evaluate natural resource injuries. Information is collected from the spill or hazardous waste site, scientific literature is reviewed, and studies are conducted to determine the extent of injury to the public's natural resources and services (e.g., recreational uses). For example, trustees may assess how many fish died after an oil spill and how many fishing trips did not occur as a result of the spill.

Identify and evaluate restoration options. Injury information is used to identify restoration opportunities and develop a restoration plan to reverse the loss. For example, trustees may determine how to restore injured fish stocks or compensate for lost fishing opportunities.

Implement restoration projects. Restoration may involve replanting wetlands to improve habitat and increase fish stocks and providing recreational access to anglers. Once the projects are completed, DARP monitors the restoration to measure effectiveness and make necessary corrections.

What has DARP achieved?

Since its establishment, DARP has recovered more than $300 million from parties responsible for pollution to restore coastal and marine resources across the country. Restoration sites include oil spills in Hawaii, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Rhode Island; contaminated mining in Idaho; and hazardous waste in California and Massachusetts.

In Florida, for example, 300,000 gallons of oil spilled near the mouth of Tampa Bay. To address natural resource injuries, NOAA, its cotrustees, and the responsible party planted mangroves, established turtle recovery programs, removed fishing lines (a major cause of bird mortality) from bird nesting islands, installed educational signs describing proper disposal methods for fishing lines, and improved access for recreational anglers and beachgoers. By identifying the full range of injuries and implementing restoration projects that addressed these injuries, NOAA and its cotrustees ensured that the public's natural resource interests were fully restored and protected.

NOAA acts as a trustee on behalf of the public to restore coastal and marine resources injured by oil spills and hazardous substance releases. To learn more, please contact—

Lisa Pelstring, NOAA–DARP
1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301.713.3038 x195
fax 301.713.4387
Lisa.Pelstring@noaa.gov

www.darp.noaa.gov

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