DAMAGE ASSESSMENT, REMEDIATION, & RESTORATION PROGRAM

DARRP

Office of Response and Restoration • Office of Habitat Conservation • General Counsel for Natural Resources

Suisun Bay "Mothball Fleet" Assessment Project

UPDATE – MARCH 2008

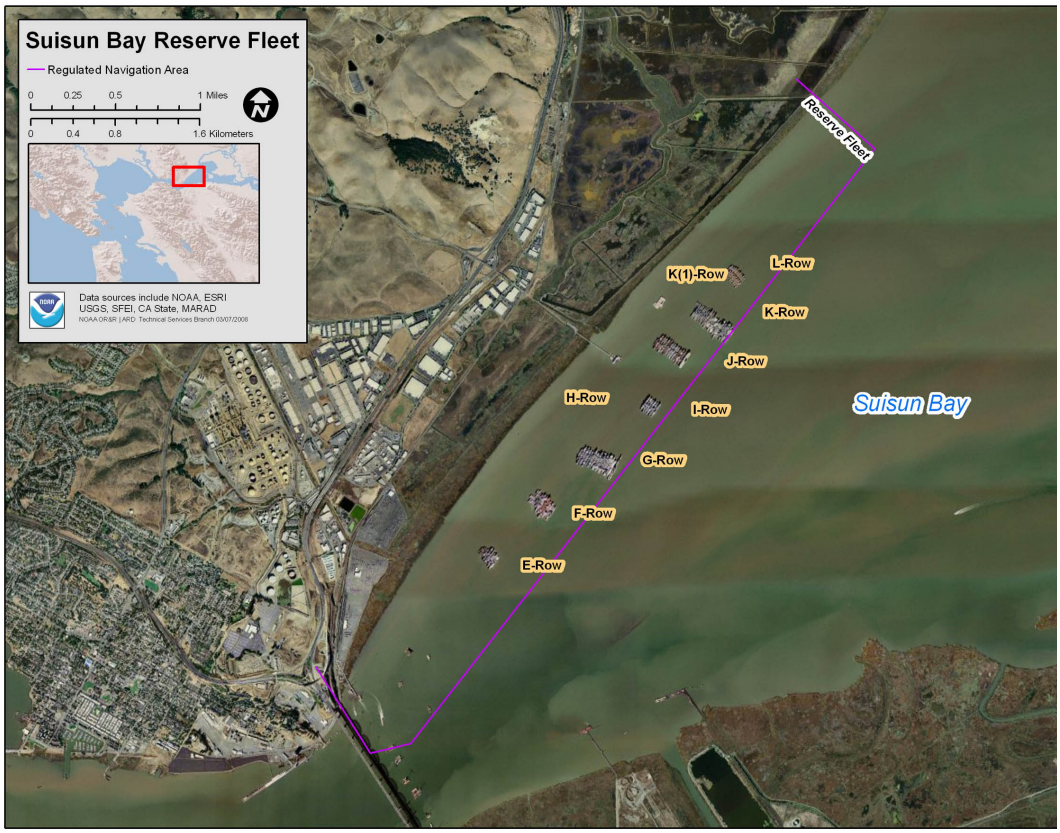
In FY 2008, NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration received an appropriation from Congress to evaluate the potential environmental impact of the federally owned vessels in Suisun Bay, California. These vessels are maintained by the United States Maritime Administration and include more than 70 obsolete or decommissioned ships, sometimes referred to as the "Reserve" or "Mothball Fleet." The State of California and several environmental groups in the San Francisco Bay area have raised concerns about the environmental impacts of the fleet and the plans to move the vessels through San Francisco Bay for eventual scrapping and disposal. Environmental concerns include the potential presence of heavy metals and antifouling agents found in the paint that is peeling and falling off of the vessel hulls. Also of concern are PCBs and other hazardous materials that may have been released from the ships. NOAA will be conducting a field investigation and preparing documents to help address these concerns.

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) collaborates with other agencies, industry, and citizens to protect and restore coastal and marine resources threatened or injured by oil spills, releases of hazardous substances, and vessel groundings.

Progress to Date

NOAA has:

- Assembled a multi-disciplinary team of scientists to provide the necessary expertise in sample design, environmental statistics, geospatial analysis and mapping, field sampling techniques, environmental toxicology, and ecological risk assessment.
- Met with state agencies, including the California Coastal Commission, the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the State Lands Commission, to solicit their input for the investigation.
- Developed draft sampling designs to evaluate the range and scope of sampling that could be conducted. These were designed to detect various potential contaminants of concern.



- Met with local environmental groups, including ArcEcology, BayKeeper, Natural Resource Defense Council, Save the Bay, San Francisco Estuary Institute, and others, to solicit their concerns and comments regarding the project.

Next Steps

- NOAA will refine sampling design and determine final contaminants of concern to be investigated based on stakeholder input.
- Field work will begin in July.
- Preliminary data delivery in fall 2008.

See timeline at right for further detail.

For More Information

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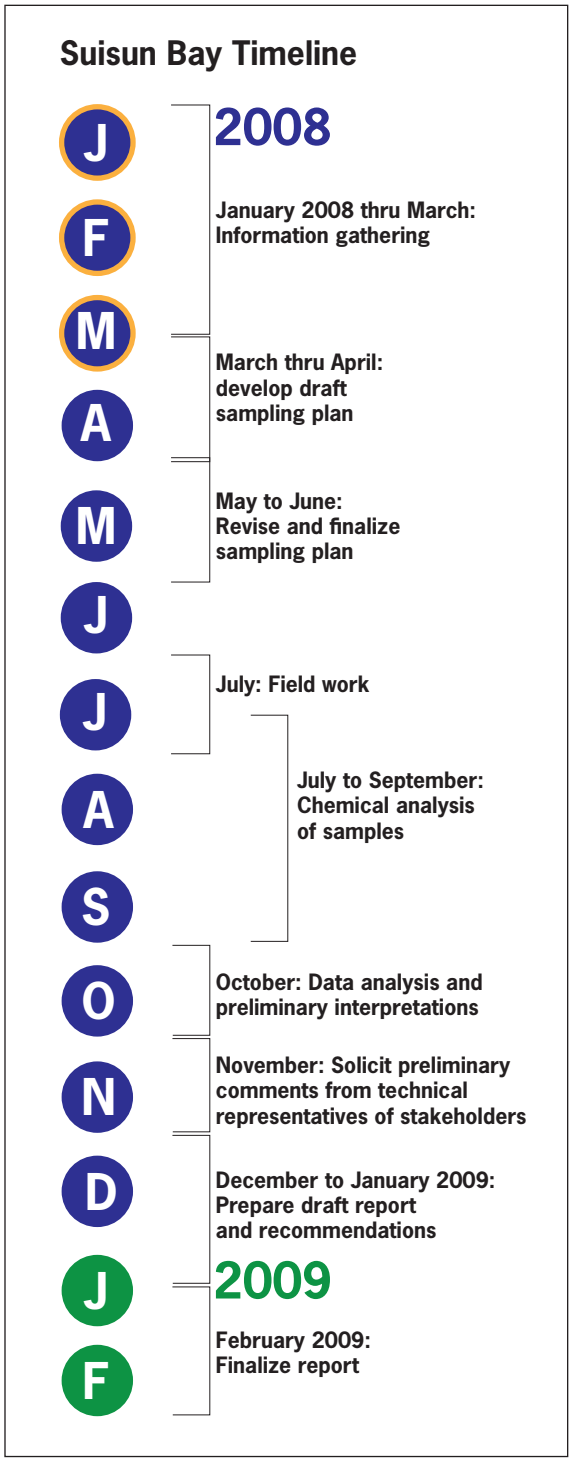
For more information about NOAA's program to protect and restore coastal and ocean resources impacted by oil and hazardous material releases, visit our Web site at http://www.darrp.noaa.gov.