



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration

Ecological Services

Goal

The goal of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration process is to ensure that the loss of public natural resources from environmental contamination is compensated by the polluters and that the injured resources and services they provide are restored.

Accomplishments

Nationally, over 180 cases have been settled and 250 cases are being conducted by the Department of Interior. Case settlements have resulted in more than \$575 million made available for restorations. These settlement dollars have funded hundreds of restoration projects with thousands of restored or protected acres of habitat.

Overview

Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration is a process used to restore natural resources injured by hazardous substances. Compensation is recovered from the people or companies responsible for the contamination. Recovery comes in the form of money or in-kind services and is used to restore natural resources and their services, including their ecological and recreational value.

Authorizing Legislation

- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) - otherwise known as Superfund
- Oil Pollution Act
- Clean Water Act

Trustees

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with other Federal agencies, and State and Tribal partners, act as “trustees” for our nation’s natural resources. They are authorized by legislation to use the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration process to restore natural resources injured by environmental contamination.

Co-Trustee Relationships

In the upper Midwest, the Service, acting on behalf of the Secretary of Interior, works with governor-



designated trustee agencies in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin and with numerous Tribal governments.

Trust Resources

Trust resources are natural resources including land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater and drinking water supplies that belong to, are managed by, are held in trust by, appertain to, or are otherwise controlled by the United States, any state or local government, any foreign government, [or] any Indian Tribe. (CERCLA §101)

Where are Natural Resource Damage Assessments and Restorations conducted?

- Oil spill sites
- Superfund sites
- Other sites of environmental contamination

Assessment and Restoration Successes

Fox River, Wisconsin

The Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council allocated over \$29 million from three Natural Resource Damage Assessment settlements with paper companies for the Green Bay/Fox River PCB site in eastern Wisconsin. The trustee agencies and partners, implementing approved restoration projects, have provided over \$14 million in matching funds from private donations and state and federal granting programs. Restoration projects include habitat protection, wetland restoration and enhancement, aquatic species reintroduction, as well as recreational projects providing more enjoyment of the Fox River and Green Bay area. More information is at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/FoxRiverNRDA/> and the Wisconsin DNR site at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/foxriver/nrda.html>

Fields Brook

Ashtabula County, Ohio

Fields Brook, a Superfund site, is a tributary of the Ashtabula River that was contaminated by the release of PCBs and other hazardous substances. Trustees, including the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Service, developed an Environmental Assessment and Natural Resource Restoration Plan for the site. The Trustees then received restoration proposals from the Ashtabula City Park Board and the Ashtabula Township Park Commission which contain multiple components. High priority projects include acquisition of 29 acres of riverine habitat and construction of a canoe launch; restoration of 6 acres of wetlands on the same property;

elimination and control of 10 acres of invasive plants on near shore habitat near Lake Erie; and restoration of near shore dune habitat using native plants. On-the-ground work will begin in spring of 2006.

Saginaw Bay and River (Lake Huron), Michigan Co-trustees, including the Service, the State of Michigan, and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, reached a negotiated settlement for natural resource damages in 1998 with General Motors Corporation and the cities of Bay City and Saginaw. The settlement is providing for substantial cleanup of river contamination and for protection and restoration of fish and wildlife habitats in the Saginaw River and Bay. Projects include Great Lakes coastal plain restoration and protection, removal of contaminant "hot spots" in the Saginaw River, and provision of public use facilities. Details of the restoration are at:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/SaginawNRDA/>

Grand Calumet River/Indiana Harbor Canal (Lake Michigan), Indiana

A Natural Resource Damage Assessment on this highly degraded area has come to fruition with a \$56 million settlement with responsible parties in 2004. This area, although highly degraded from industrial activity and development, has significant resource potential, including rare dune habitat; it is adjacent to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. This settlement is a direct result of a very long and strong working relationship with the State of Indiana, and will result in major habitat improvements and restorations, in conjunction with activities by the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, and the State of Indiana. Details of this case are at:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/GrandCalumetRiverNRDA/>