

The Joint Assessment Team Concept

The concept of the Joint Assessment Team (JAT) grew out of the desire to enhance dialogue among practitioners involved in natural resource damage assessment (NRDA).

Under CERCLA¹ and OPA² damage assessment rules, trustees are required to invite potentially responsible parties to the damage assessment process. While these rules encourage cooperation, they do not provide any specific guidelines on how to develop a cooperative assessment process. This was the reason for the genesis of the Cooperative Assessment Process (CAP) web site, which serves as a clearinghouse of information for cooperative assessment frameworks, approaches, and tools.

Damage assessments may be confrontational, involving years of difficult negotiations that strain the pocketbooks and patience of the parties involved. In an effort to ameliorate this possibility, some trustee and industry representatives have decided to abandon the unproductive “us against them” mentality. One approach is the formation of JATs in various parts of the country. JATs serve as a natural complement to NRDA casework, providing a forum through which practitioners can build on existing expectations, understanding, communication, and trust. In fact, JATs and comparable structures have helped move NRDA cases in a more cooperative fashion.

Those who form JATs experience considerable benefits, including—

- Improved working relationships among trustees, response agencies, and industry representatives.
- Better understanding of the respective parties (e.g., how they are organized, their roles in the event of an incident, the challenges they face).

1 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.).

2 Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (33 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.).

- Better understanding of NRDA issues and enhanced consideration of ideas that might better improve the damage assessment process when addressing incidents.

The documents provided in this section of the web site are intended to further inform NRDA practitioners. If you have any questions regarding the JATs and the documents posted, [contact information](#) is provided for your benefit.