

Protecting and Restoring Natural Resources in Washington

Issues

- Washington contains over 3,000 miles of shoreline. Puget Sound is one of the most economically and ecologically important estuarine systems in the United States.
- A large marine shipping industry with potential for oil spills, and existing Superfund sites threaten Washington natural resources. Persistent toxic chemicals contaminate the sediments of many marine and coastal bays, especially in urban areas.
- Over 40 species in the region are listed as federal or state threatened and endangered including Puget Sound Steelhead and Chinook salmon, a cultural icon of the Pacific Northwest. High rates of pollution and habitat loss have contributed to species decline.
- NOAA listed a population of killer whales as endangered under the ESA in 2005. The population now numbers in the 80s. Their decline is likely to continue until NOAA learns more about what needs to be done to reverse the trend. Possible causes are: reduced quantity and quality of prey; persistent pollutants that may cause immune or reproductive dysfunction; oil spills; and disturbance from vessels.

What we do

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) acts as a trustee for natural resources on behalf of the public. DARRP collaborates with federal, state, and tribal entities and also works with cleanup agencies (such as EPA), local organizations, the public, and those responsible for the incident to:

- protect coastal and marine natural resources;
- respond to discharges of oil and hazardous substances;
- assess risks and injuries to natural resources; and
- restore injured natural resources and related socioeconomic benefits.

How we do it

DARRP acts as a trustee for natural resources to:

- work cooperatively with those responsible for the incident;
- develop innovative approaches and techniques for remediation and restoration;



Elliott Bay and Lower Duwamish Waterway, Seattle, WA - see case highlights.

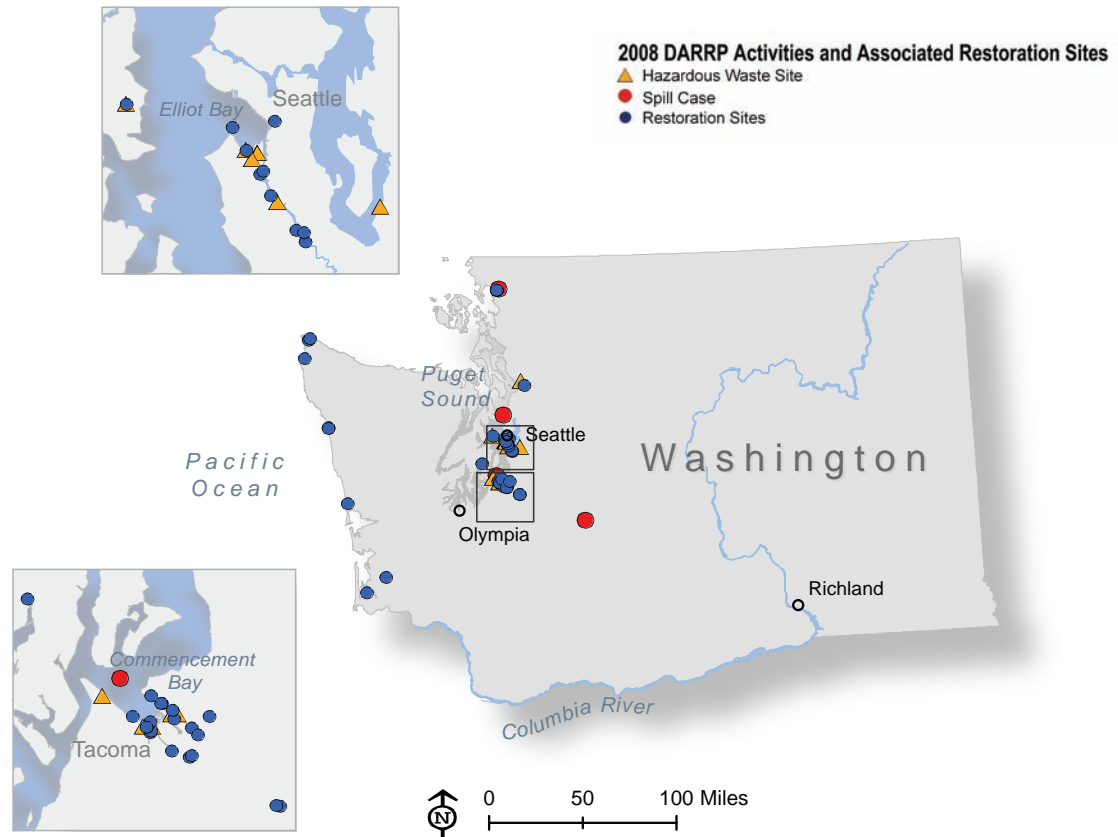
- work with the public to select restoration options to compensate for injuries to natural resources; and
- design and implement or oversee natural resource restoration projects and monitor their success.

DARRP Accomplishments

- Restoration and/or protection of 543 acres of marine habitats, 1,058 acres of freshwater and terrestrial habitats, and 22 stream miles in Washington (completed and planned activities).
- Settlements have resulted in 45 protection and restoration projects in Washington.
- Cleanup actions promote recovery of coastal resources and communities at 22 hazardous waste sites.



Commencement Bay, Tacoma, WA - see case highlights.



Historic and ongoing case highlights

- Whatcom Creek, Bellingham – Replanted 40,000 trees and acquired an additional 12 acres of land to expand the park impacted by a ruptured pipeline that discharged 236,000 gallons of gasoline into Whatcom Creek. The streambed was restored to enhance salmon spawning and 2 wetland projects were constructed.
- During the summer of 2008 a third project, the Red Tail Reach project, will be constructed on Whatcom Creek creating approximately 3.5 acres of new floodplain, including 0.3 acres of new marsh vegetation. More than 2.2 acres of riparian buffer will be restored along with 0.7 acres of transitional wetland habitat.
- Commencement Bay, Tacoma – Working to evaluate site problems, characterize risk to salmon and other species, develop protective cleanups, and monitor conditions to ensure they improve over time. Settlements with more than 50 responsible parties have been completed to restore injured natural resources. Sixteen projects are completed or underway that will result in over 200 acres restored or pre-served (bottom photo on page 1) and two culverts replaced to allow fish passage.
- In 2007 the Old Soldier’s Home project was completed which set back 9,000 feet of levee to restore and reconnect 67 acres of floodplain habitat to the Puyallup River. In addition to restoring critical habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon, the project provides the community of Orting with additional flood protection by increasing the levee from 25-year flood protection to 100-year flood protection.
- Elliott Bay and Lower Duwamish Waterway, Seattle – Working with partners to evaluate ecological risk, develop protective cleanup actions, evaluate injury to natural resources, and implement restoration from two previous settlements. Completed restoration activities include two sediment remediation projects, one subtidal enhancement project, four intertidal habitat restoration projects, and contribution of funds towards two property acquisitions for future habitat restoration (top photo on page 1).
- NOAA, along with the other trustees, is working with the City of Bainbridge Island to construct a tenth project, the Milwaukee Dock Eelgrass Restoration Project in Eagle Harbor of Bainbridge Island. The project will restore an existing eelgrass bed to its historic extent by filling a dredged channel with clean material and planting eelgrass across the 3 acre site. This project will address injuries to natural resources resulting from releases of hazardous substances from a former wood-treatment facility in Eagle Harbor.

For further information about DARRP, please visit
<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov>

