



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Environmental Contaminants Program

Region 3- the Great Lakes & Big Rivers Region

Ecological Services

Program Goals

- o Conserve trust resources and their habitats through contaminant prevention.
- o Restore and recover trust resources and their habitats harmed by environmental contaminants and other stressors.
- o Provide contaminant expertise and quality scientific data and interpretation to support sound management decisions.
- o Increase accountability, coordination, and visibility of the Program to our partners and the public.
- o Maintain and support an adequate and technically capable state-of-the art workforce.

Region 3 Facts

There are eight States in Region 3 (ILL,IN,IA,MI, MN,MO,OH,WI). There is an Ecological Services office for each State with env contaminants capabilities. To learn more or contact us, visit us online at:

www.fws.gov/midwest/eco_serv/env_cont

Fish, Wildlife and Environmental Contaminants

The Midwest is home to fish and wildlife resources which must have high *quality* habitat in sufficient *quantities* to sustain diverse and abundant populations.

Environmental Contaminant Biologists, working throughout the region, help to insure both quality and quantity by providing specialized expertise in pollution science to identify and prevent adverse effects, and then to restore the environment back to a healthy condition. They are experts in oil and chemical spill response, determining water quality effects on fish and wildlife, determining pesticide effects, and then restoring habitats harmed by pollution. Program activities are integrated with all other Service activities where we work with partners at other state, federal, tribal agencies and private organizations.

The Environmental Contaminants Program focuses on prevention, identification, and restoration. Fish and wildlife are exposed to harmful chemicals released through a myriad of human activities such as oil spills, industrial and municipal discharges, mining and smelting, pesticides from residential lawns and runoff from agricultural lands, and many others. In addition, fish and wildlife face new threats every day from newly introduced contaminants such as flame retardants, stain repellents, chemical additives, personal care products, and pharmaceuticals. And global climate change may heighten the impacts of pollutants and increase the sensitivity of fish and wildlife to contaminants.



The **Environmental Contaminants Program** is unique among Federal agencies as it is the *primary* Federal program with expertise in fish and wildlife ecotoxicology that does not, generally, exist in other Federal or state agencies. The Program's expertise, unique authorities, and on-the-ground presence in each state enables it to provide sound scientific information and support to all Service programs and decision-makers, including Refuges, Endangered Species, Migratory Birds, and Fisheries, on behalf of Federal trust resources. It provides these same services to a wide range of Federal and state agencies, tribes, and private organizations.

Federal trust resources for which the Service is primarily responsible are Service lands (Refuges); federally listed threatened and endangered and candidate species; migratory birds; and interjurisdictional fish.

Program Vision (*Why We Do It*)

We strive to leave a legacy of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats free from adverse impacts of environmental contaminants. We pursue this Vision by emphasizing, first, prevention of contamination, then by eliminating them.

Guiding Principles

Principles guiding the Environmental Contaminants Program in Region 3:

1. Prevent impacts of contaminants to trust resources.
2. Restore trust resources impacted by contaminants.
3. Facilitate other Service program goals.
4. Maximize partnerships.
5. Communicate results, accomplishments, capabilities.

Prioritization of Our Work – (How We Do It)

To help focus our efforts on the highest priority needs, the Program employs several criteria to prioritize our work. Actions are screened through primary criteria: does it address needs of trust resources; does it support, or is it required, by statute or mandate; and does it facilitate our fiduciary responsibility to tribes. Secondary criteria are consideration of the extent to which the action prevents contamination, extent to which the Program can influence final resource management or regulatory decisions, and extent to which it supports a stated objective of another Service program or partner.

Environmental Contaminants Activities (What We Do)

The Environmental Contaminants Program engages in a wide range of activities that support our National and Regional Program priorities and goals:

Prevention

1. Assist to prepare for spills of oil and other hazardous substances to increase awareness.
2. Provide technical assistance to develop water quality criteria by U.S. EPA and step-down State water quality standards to ensure protection of fish and wildlife
3. Provide technical assistance to U.S. EPA during registration of and labeling of pesticides to prevent/minimize unintended impacts.
4. Review pesticide use proposals and provide technical assistance to other Service programs (primarily Refuges) as part of the Service's integrated approach to pest management.
5. Identify potential contaminant concerns for other Service programs to minimize liability when acquiring lands.
6. Participate in consultations with other Federal agencies under the Endangered Species Act for contaminant-related issues.

Investigation

1. Provide technical assistance to determine if contaminants pose a threat to Federal trust resources (migratory birds, endangered species, interjurisdictional fish) both on and off Service lands.
2. Plan and implement Natural Resource Damage Assessments in partnership with other State, Federal, and tribal entities - We are currently assessing damages at more than 30 sites in all eight states of Region 3.

Restoration

1. Plan and implement natural resource restorations resulting from resolution of Natural Resource Damage Assessment cases, typically through settlements, in partnership with State, Federal, and tribal entities – paid for by responsible parties, not the American taxpayer.
2. Provide technical assistance to plan and implement management actions to eliminate or reduce contaminant impacts on and off Service lands, such as impacts resulting from spills or other releases of hazardous substances

Interesting NRDA Fact

Region 3 has settled about 50 cases that have enabled environmental restorations - many of the restorations are complete, most are being implemented, and a few remain in the planning stages

Program Vitality

1. Develop effective working relationships with peers, partners, and stakeholders to identify and achieve shared objectives.
2. Provide information to management and policy forums, the scientific community, and the public to inform resource management decisions.
3. Hold ourselves accountable for the efficient and effective use of Program funds and resources
4. Seek to maintain an adequately sized and highly skilled, experienced, professional, and motivated workforce.

