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

Protecting and Restoring Natural Resources in the Great Lakes

Issues

- The Great Lakes are a premier national aquatic resource, containing approximately 90% of the U.S. supply of fresh water. Coastal areas and wetlands support numerous salmonid, trout, and eel fisheries. Beluga whales and other marine mammals in the Saint Lawrence Estuary are also important natural resources.
- The U.S. and Canada identified 43 Areas of Concern with severe environmental degradation including sediment and water contamination by hazardous substances (such as PCBs and PAHs), invasive species, and impaired fish and benthic communities.
- Discharges from several Superfund sites contaminated sediments which threaten natural resources and impede safe navigation and transportation along hundreds of miles of navigable waters.

Cannelton Superfund site in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. At this site NOAA provided technical support during EPA remediation and monitoring - see case highlights.

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.

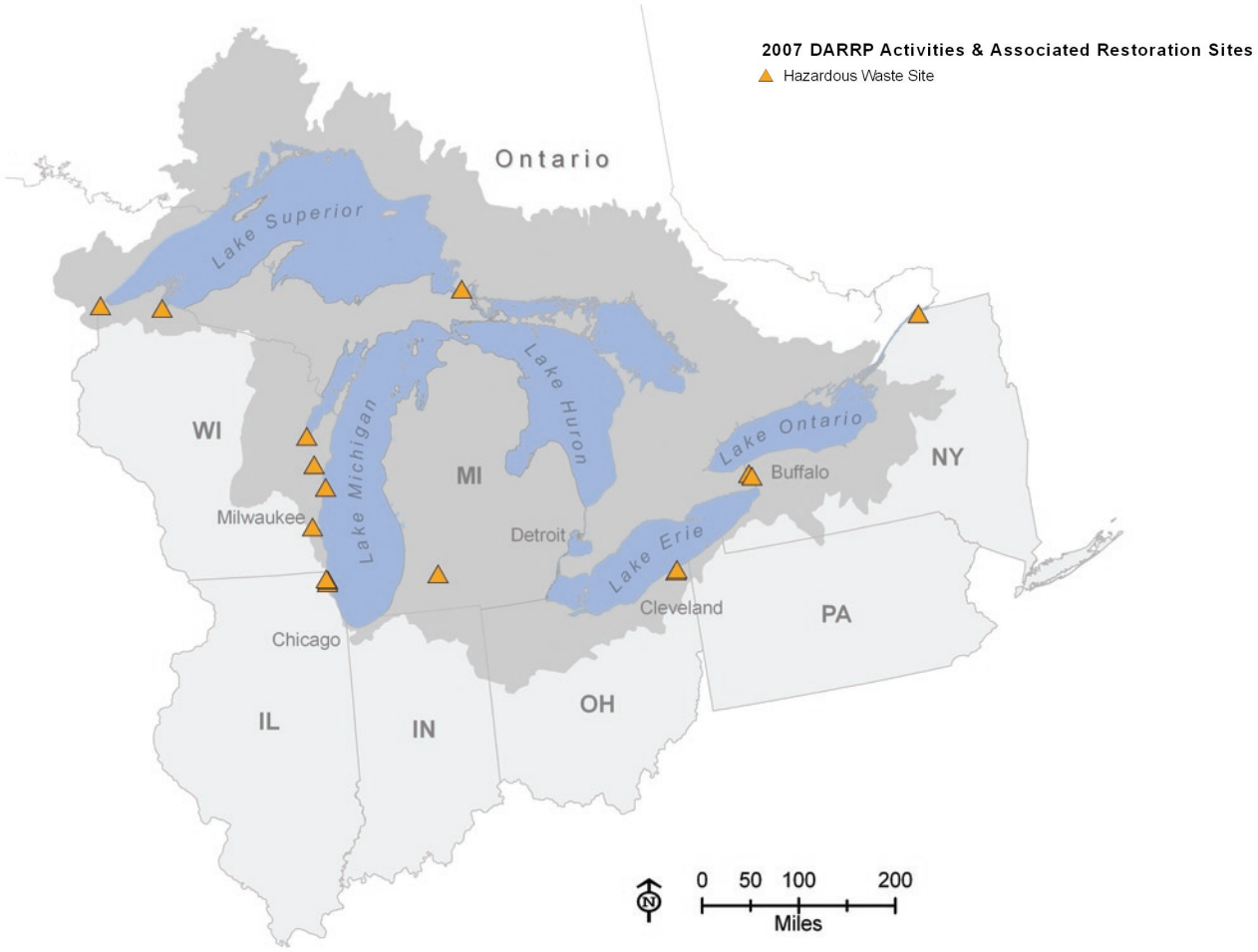
How we do it

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;
- 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 more than 7,000 acres of wetland, upland and aquatic fish habitat, and preservation of more than 7,500 acres of wetland and upland habitat in states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio.
- Settlements resulting in more than 65 protection and restoration projects.
- Cleanup actions promoting recovery of coastal resources and communities at 12 hazardous waste sites.



Historic and ongoing case highlights

- Kalamazoo River, MI – Provided technical and legal assistance to develop integrated remedial and restoration strategies, minimize risk, and enhance habitat recovery as part of the mediation process. A landmark agreement was reached and a more comprehensive assessment and protective remedy will be implemented.
- Cannelton Industries, Sault Sainte Marie, MI – Provided extensive technical assistance to EPA by designing and developing a long-term biological monitoring program to verify the effectiveness of site cleanup actions; recommending the adopted mitigation measures to minimize potential recontamination and increase recovery.
- Fields Brook, Ashtabula, OH – Worked with co-trustees to achieve settlement for cleanup of contaminated floodplains/wetlands and to conduct wetland restoration; continuing work with EPA to ensure that the selected remedy is adequately protective.
- Waukegan Harbor, Lake Michigan, IL – Ensuring that the Great Lakes Legacy Act project provides protection for fishery resources and will restore, preserve, and promote safe navigation and maritime commerce (working with EPA and city).
- Fox River/Green Bay, Wisconsin and Michigan – Worked with co-trustees to coordinate a cooperative effort to clean up and restore the Fox River; provided extensive assistance to EPA for effective cleanup and monitoring of PCB-contaminated sediment; and participated in planning for thousands of acres of wetland restoration (e.g., Wisconsin: 4,788 acres and Michigan: 1,500 acres).

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