

This document provides an introduction and general guidance in designing injury assessments within the NRDA context, and in selecting procedures for ensuring that the information produced meets the needs of trustees and other users as required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The overriding theme in this document is that *the design and implementation of injury studies is but one of the elements that trustees should consider when making NRDA decisions*. When developing an injury assessment, it is important that the trustees evaluate the potential for and significance of the injuries, the strength of that information, and whether actions can be taken to restore the injured natural resources and make the environment and public whole. However, it is equally important to assess other considerations (i.e., regulatory requirements, public policies, economic factors, etc.) that may affect decisionmaking. In Chapter 2 (section 2.4.2), there were a number of questions that trustees should ask when evaluating whether and how an NRDA should be conducted. It is instructive to reiterate them here:

- What are the natural resources and services of concern?
- What are the procedures available to evaluate and quantify injury, and the associated cost and time requirements?
- What is the evidence indicating exposure?
- What is the pathway from the incident to the natural resource and/or service of concern?
- What is the adverse change or impairment that constitutes injury?
- What is the evidence indicating injury?
- What is the mechanism by which injury occurred?
- What is the potential degree and spatial and temporal extent of the injury?

- What is the potential natural recovery period?
- What are the kinds of primary and/or compensatory restoration actions that are feasible?

Lessons learned from prior NRDA's also suggest that the role of injury assessment in NRDA decisionmaking can be strengthened by addressing the following areas:

- Injury assessment efforts should include mechanisms for periodic review and redirection of efforts when information justifies a change.
- Prior to implementing injury assessment, it must be clear how data are to be used, and what type of decisions will be based upon the data.
- The objectives established for any injury assessment should be achievable scientifically, technologically, logistically, and cost-effectively.
- Injury assessment efforts should be integrated and coordinated among all involved parties in order to optimize use of available staff and financial resources. Fiscal controls should be compatible with program controls and objectives.
- The results of the injury assessment should be clearly communicated to decisionmakers and the public.