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National Oceanic *and* Atmospheric Administration  
National Ocean Service

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OFFICE *of* RESPONSE *and* RESTORATION

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*Coastal Protection and Restoration Division*



# Ecological Risk and Natural Resource Injury Considerations for Site Assessments

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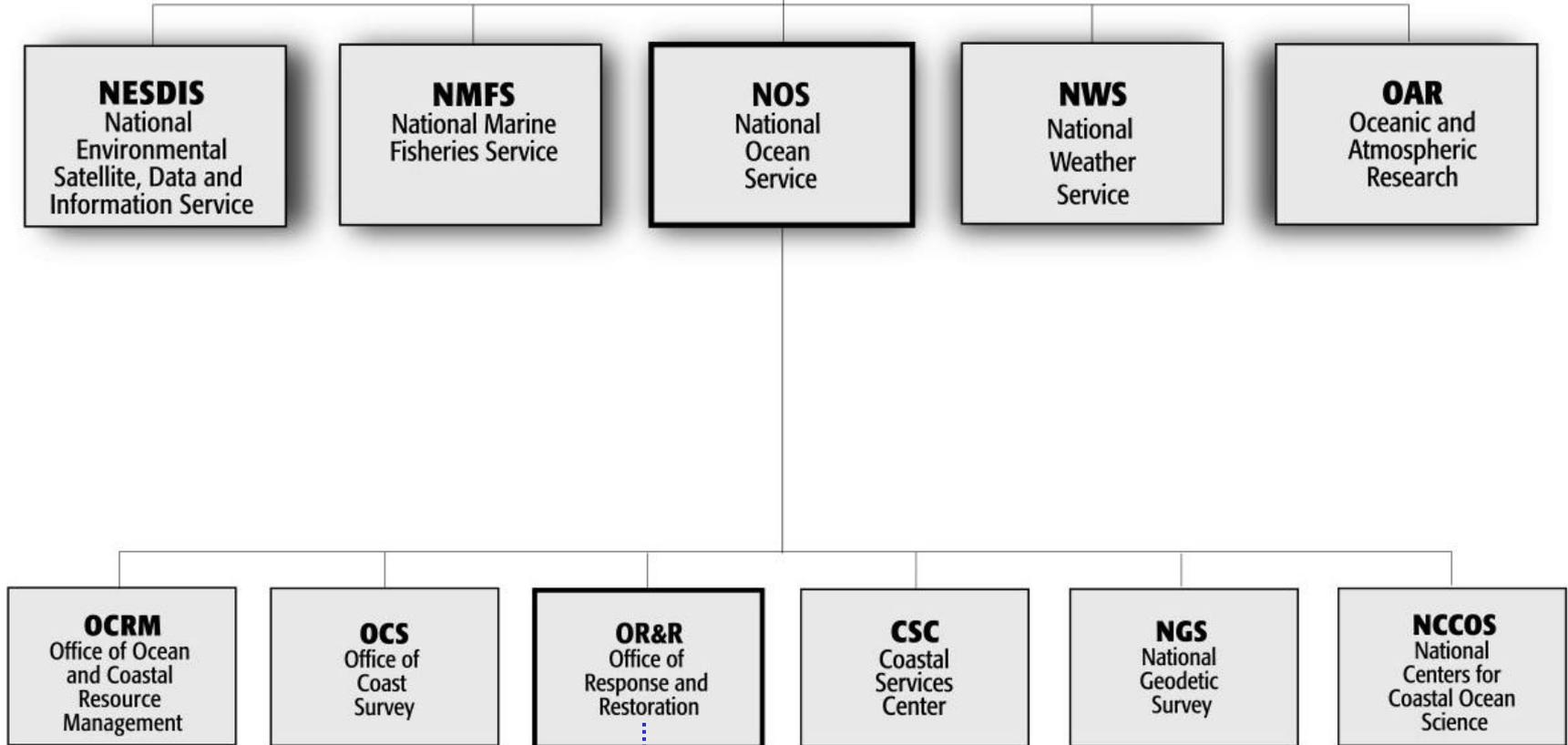


## OBJECTIVES

- 1 - Provide a brief overview of the NOAA Coastal Protection and Restoration Program
- 2 – Discuss CPRD Coordination in Preliminary Assessments
- 3 – Discuss the Role of Natural Resource Trustees

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# NOAA



**Coastal Protection and Restoration Division**  
**Damage Assessment Center**  
**Hazardous Materials Response Division**



# Coastal Protection and Restoration Program

## Goal of the Program

To protect and restore coastal resources threatened by releases of hazardous substances.

## Who are CPRD and “the CRCs”

- Coastal Resource Coordinators (CRC’s) – Environmental Scientists in EPA regions
- Technical Support Team in Seattle with expertise in:
  - Ecology and Toxicology
  - Sediment chemistry
  - Ecological risk assessment
  - GIS and database management

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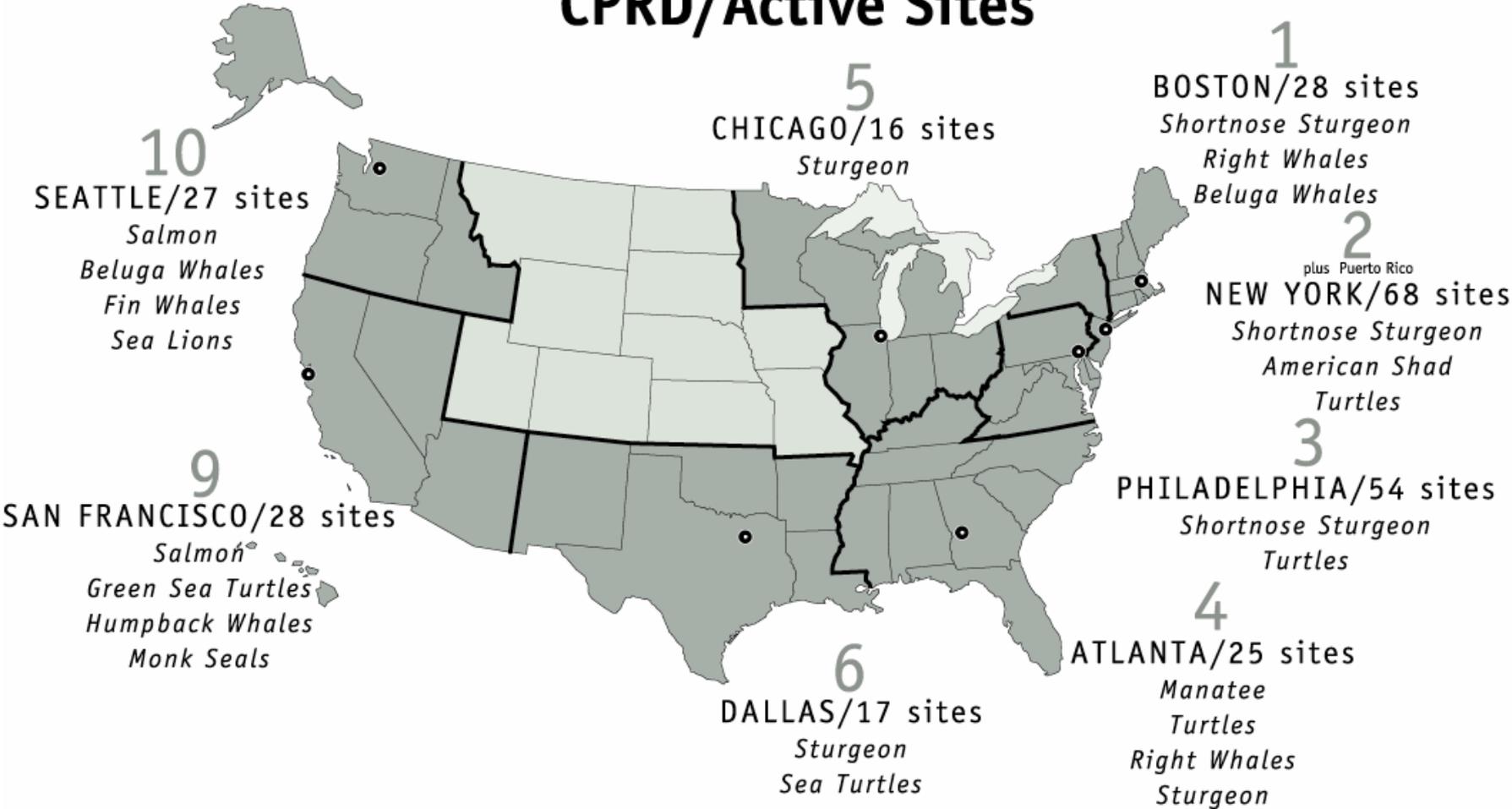


## Protect and Restore Coastal Resources Threatened by Releases of Hazardous Substances

- Help EPA regional offices and states evaluate coastal resource concerns at hazardous waste sites
- Improve coordination with Federal, state, and tribal natural resource trustee agencies under CERCLA (Superfund)
- Use Coastal Resource Coordinators as liaisons between NOAA and EPA for CERCLA-related trustee activities
- Use a multidisciplinary team for research and technical support throughout the cleanup process

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# CPRD/Active Sites





## How We Achieve Our Goal

Emphasis on cooperation and partnerships

Integrate trustee concerns and sound science into cleanup and natural resource recovery

Reach cooperative settlements for restoration

Coordinate with DARP experts

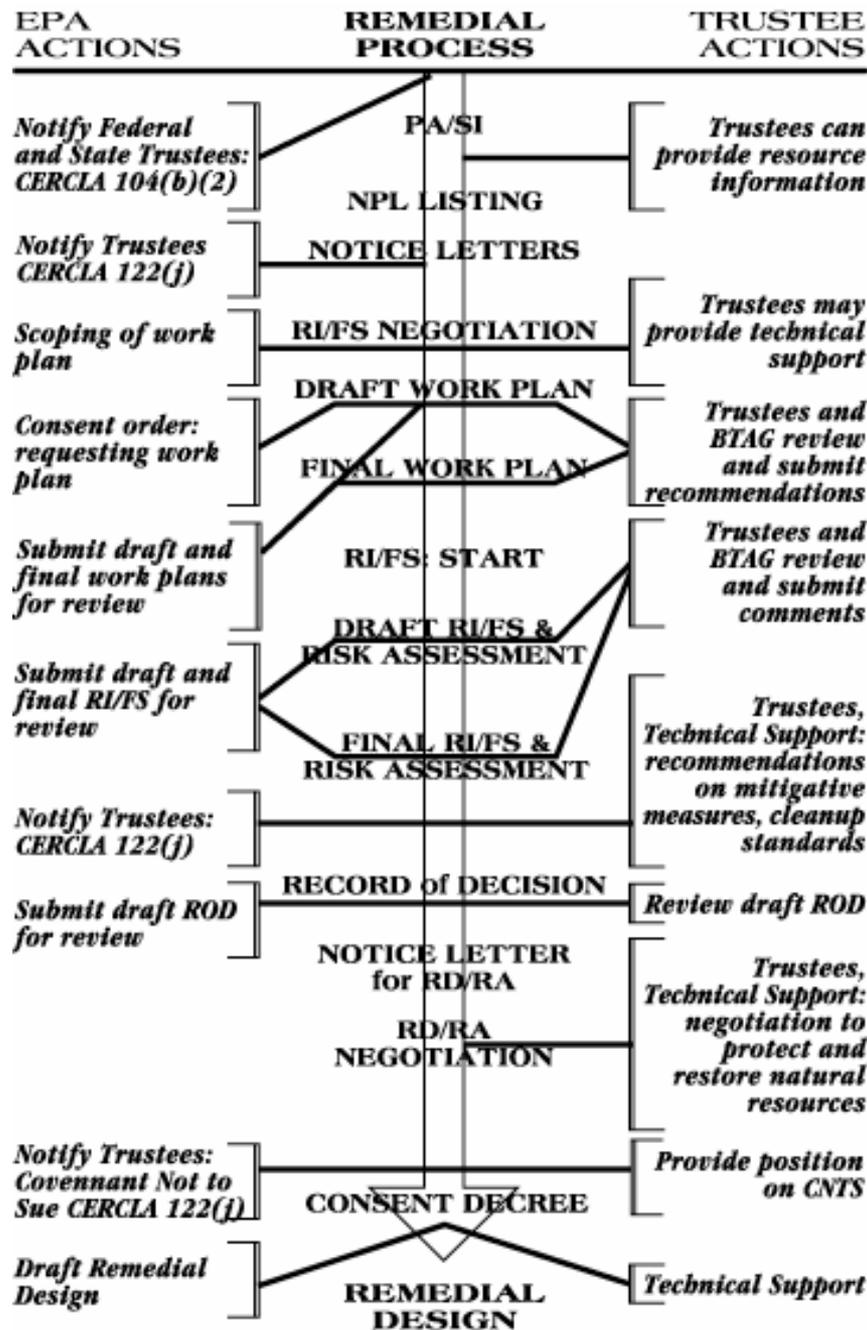
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## CPRD Coordination in Remedial Process

- Site ranking and NPL listing
- Sampling design
- Human health and ecological risk assessment
- Cleanup planning
- Implementation and monitoring

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## Preliminary Assessments / Site Screening

- Of critical importance to NOAA
- Helps bring attention and resources to sites of greatest concern
- NOAA/Trustees Can:
  - Help EPA develop Preliminary Assessment sampling plans
  - Ensure that sampling addresses trustee concerns
  - Review Preliminary Assessment data
  - Write up short “resources at risk and level of concern” memos for EPA

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## HRS Packages – Trustees Can Help

- Provide EPA with information about threatened and endangered species, or listed critical habitat that may be affected by the site
- Describe for EPA other resources of special concern, such as spawning habitat or breeding grounds
- Review the sections of draft HRS packages that address ecological risk
- Help EPA determine appropriate screening values for use in HRS packages

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## Hazardous Waste Site Reviews

- Provides site background that focuses on contaminant source characteristics, contaminant migration pathways, and local surface water characteristics
- Provide information about threatened and endangered species, or listed critical habitat that may be affected by the site
- Describe other resources of special concern, such as spawning habitat or breeding grounds
- Evaluates the sampling data regarding nature and extent of contamination, media and locations sampled, contaminants analyzed and methods used, etc.
- Help determine appropriate screening values for use in HRS packages

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## Who are “natural resource trustees?”

- Federal natural resource management agencies, including NOAA and Department of Interior
- Tribes
- States
- Federal land-management agencies, including Departments of Defense, Energy, and Agriculture

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## Natural Resources are defined under CERCLA as—

- Land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater, and drinking water supplies
- Resources managed or held in trust by, belonging to, or otherwise controlled by the U.S., any state or local government, any tribe, or (if the resources are subject to a trust restriction or alienation) any member of a tribe.

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## NOAA acts on behalf . . .

. . . of the Secretary of Commerce as a Federal trustee for living and non-living natural resources in coastal and marine areas.

### **Natural resources of concern to NOAA include:**

- all life stages of coastal fishery resources; migratory fish species throughout their ranges; and rivers, lakes and streams which historically or presently support these species
- federally endangered and threatened species, including critical habitat, and marine mammals, under NOAA's responsibility
- tidal wetlands, salt marshes, estuaries, and other important supporting habitat
- all resources of National Marine Sanctuaries and National Estuarine Reserves.

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## Theme Areas for Protection of NOAA Trust Resources

- Reducing loading of contamination to coastal waters
- Protecting sensitive species from contaminant effects
- Protecting the function of sensitive habitats such as wetlands
- Re-opening fisheries closed to public use because of contamination
- Allowing full use of port areas where dredging or development may be affected by the presence of contaminated sediments

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## NPL Listing

- Trustees can help get sites that pose serious risks to our resources on the NPL
- Trustees can write letters of support in response to proposed listings
- Support can be scientific – significant risk to natural resources
- Support can be legal / programmatic – deferring or choosing to not list sites impacts the ability of federal trustees to bring claims
- Trustees can help build broad support for listing
- Trustees can participate in Regional Decision Team meetings or provide written letters of support

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## Why Trustee Input is Important

- Example – a small landfill in Alaska would have been overlooked by EPA if the trustees had not pointed out that the largest breeding population of Stellar’s Sea lions is just down the beach. EPA is now actively overseeing the cleanup.
- Trustees can also support deferral if a site does not pose significant risks. For example, EPA deferred a site to the State of Washington, despite strong pressure from the environmental community, in part because NOAA made a clear case that the site posed little risk to our trust resources.

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## Trustee involvement doesn't stop with listing!

- Remember that crazy diagram a few slides back?
- Trustee involvement early in the process is critical to getting sites with significant ecological risks listed, but trustees should be involved throughout the cleanup process.

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## NOAA's Coastal Protection and Restoration Division

- Works with EPA and state Superfund programs to protect and restore fish, marine mammals, and other coastal resources and habitats injured by releases of hazardous substances;
- Develops new ways to screen sites, assess ecological risk, develop protective cleanup levels, and strategies to enhance recovery of coastal habitats.
- Develops and provides decision-making tools and information to evaluate and plan remediation and restoration on a watershed-wide basis.
  - CPRD Watershed Database and Mapping Projects
  - Sediment Toxicity Database
- Works with local and regional partners to address coastal contamination problems and restoration solutions.

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