



Environmental Response, Damage Assessment, and Restoration Program



A barge conducts an emergency repair on a protective breakwater at El Morro Castle, San Juan National Historic Site that was damaged by the grounding of a large ship.

Each year millions of dollars in damage is caused to natural and cultural resources by human activity in and around national parks. Ships running aground on coral reefs and sea grass beds, oil and hazardous substance spills, fires, boundary encroachments, and traffic accidents result in damage to resources. Most of these incidents are unintentional; however, significant damage is also caused by illegal activities such as trespassing, vandalism, and theft of plants and wildlife. When resources are damaged by unpermitted human activity the National Park Service must repair those resources.

The Natural Resource Challenge supports this effort by providing funds for additional damage assessment and restoration specialists, research, and Servicewide training. The program provides a highly trained and specialized team to assess damage caused to resources and determine appropriate restoration actions. The team also determines loss of ecological or human-use services provided by affected resources. The ERDAR staff works with civil damage attorneys from the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Justice to develop damage claims. Claims are then settled, or adjudicated in federal court. Once claims are resolved the program provides assistance by preparing restoration plans, conducting environmental reviews, seeking public comment, and carrying out restoration projects.



The damage from an oil well blow out on the boundary of Obed Wild and Scenic River on July 20, 2002 is in the assessment stage.

Restoring natural and cultural resources is expensive, filled with uncertainties, and in extreme cases may not be possible. In the past when incidents occurred causing significant damage, resources often languished in impaired states for years or until parks could obtain money to repair the damage. The delay in restoration resulted in increased damage spreading beyond originally affected areas.

Since the program's inception in 1993 over \$17 million has been collected for restoration of park resources, and over 60 cases have been successfully settled without litigation in federal court. In FY 2002, the program also drafted and released for public comment internal policy and guidance for the implementation of the civil damage authorities available to the National Park Service. In addition, the program staff participated in more than 20 special task forces, interagency work groups, trustee councils, and workshops to help develop policy, guidance, and regulations for the U.S. Department of the Interior's Damage Assessment and Restoration Program.



Coral head crushed by a boat grounding in Biscayne National Park.

The National Park Service is charged with stewardship of public resources and has legal recourse under specific federal laws when resources are damaged by actions of a third party. Under federal law anyone who causes damage to park resources is responsible for the restoration of that damage.

The National Park Service formed the Environmental Response, Damage Assessment, and Restoration Program (ERDAR) to seek compensation from responsible parties to restore harmed resources to their pre-incident conditions.

Success of the program is dependent upon the ability to assess damages and restore

injured resources and their services in a manner which is reasonable, defensible, and accountable. Application of various assessment and economic quantification tools must be consistent no matter where harm occurs in the National Park System.

The Environmental Response, Damage Assessment, and Restoration Program offers opportunities for the National Park Service to address harm caused by human events, stop damage from increasing, and restore resources to their original baseline condition.

Current Restoration Projects



Examples of Current Restoration Projects Resulting From Successful Damage Claims

- 1 **Gateway National Recreation Area**—piping plover habitat improvement projects. Cause -oil spill.
- 2 **National Capitol Region**—wildlife habitat, flood control, riparian forest enhancement, and fishery management projects. Cause-oil spill
- 3 **Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park**—archeological research and stabilization of Civil War earth works. Cause - adjacent land development and land disturbance.
- 4 **Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park**—coral reef and sea grass restoration projects. Cause- ship groundings.
- 5 **San Juan National Historic Site**—shoreline stabilization and visitor enhancement projects. Cause-oil spill. Emergency repair to protective breakwater. Cause-large ship grounding.
- 6 **Indiana Dunes National Recreation Area**—critical habitat for endangered species bought and added to the park. Cause-compensation for harm caused by hazardous substances.
- 7 **Padre Island National Seashore**—dune reconstruction and stabilization, sand replacement, and habitat and visitor facilities enhancement projects. Cause- oil spill.
- 8 **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**—restoration of tidal marshland, habitat improvement, and visitor facilities improvement. Cause-oil spill
- 9 **USS Arizona Memorial**—shoreline reconstruction and stabilization, visitor enhancement projects. Cause-oil spill.
- 10 **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**—vegetation restoration and habitat enhancement project. Cause-boundary encroachment and removal of native plants and habitat.