


## Natural Resource Damage Assessment



In some cases, when a release of chemicals impacts natural resources such as sensitive ecological habitats, the regulators assess the nature, extent, and magnitude of the impact through a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). The NRDA is then used as a basis to monetize the damage to, and restoration of, the natural resource.

Federal NRDA protocols were developed by the Department of the Interior; however, other Federal and State agencies can initiate or participate in an NRDA as trustees. In many instances, several agencies work together, as the trustees of the resource, to implement the NRDA.

Once it is known that an NRDA is required, trustees will develop an Assessment Plan to identify how the potential damages will be evaluated. Next, the trustees will gather the data necessary to quantify the injuries and determine damages through Assessment Implementation. A Report of Assessment will be prepared to detail reasonable restoration alternatives, and select a preferred alternative.

The consultant implementing the NRDA for the trustees must perform the work in general accordance with the protocols dictated in the regulations. The party responsible for the release will also retain a consultant to work with the trustees and their consultant. However, given that the NRDA process results in both monetary damages and mitigation, the relationship between the responsible party and the trustees can become adversarial.

**Aquilologic** staff has supported trustees in conducting NRDA's as part of a consultant team, focusing on impacts to soil, groundwater, surface water (e.g. rivers, wetlands, ponds, vernal pools), and the near-shore marine environment.