

**Recommendations for Conducting Cooperative  
Natural Resource Damage Assessment**



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**West Coast Joint Assessment Team**

The active members of the JAT include:

- Alaska Tanker Company
- BP
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Office of Spill Prevention and Response
- Chevron
- Conoco-Phillips
- Kinder Morgan
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Pacific States-BC Oil Spill Task Force
- Shell Oil Company
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Guidance is provided for:

- Notifying NRDA Team members;
- Coordinating NRDA activities with the response unified command;
- Developing a coordinated NRDA organization, including command structure and technical working groups;
- Developing an interim cooperative assessment agreement;
- Conducting various ephemeral data collection activities;
- Managing data;
- Communicating NRDA activities to the public; and
- Including NRDA in response oil spill drills and exercises.

## 4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN NRDA AND THE SPILL RESPONSE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)

An example of where communication and coordination is critical between the NRDA team and IMT is during the collection of “ephemeral” data. Such data or information is only measurable during or shortly following a spill and is essential in documenting and assessing the spatial extent and degree of natural resource injuries. Types of data that often require collection immediately following an oil spill include:

- Source oil samples to determine toxicity and enable the comparison of the associated fingerprint with the fingerprint of hydrocarbons that may be found in various field samples;
- Potential petroleum constituent concentrations in water column, sediment, or tissue samples prior to, and shortly after, oil contact to determine baseline and assess exposure and injury; and
- Aerial photography or video footage of shorelines prior to and after oiling.

This information may or may not be considered necessary for response effort but essential for the NRDA. NRDA sampling and data collection activities must be coordinated with the response due to the limited resource (vessels, helicopters, ground transport, etc.) availability that is common in the early stages of a response.

Examples of NRDA resource requests from the spill response may include the following:

- Space, including tables, chairs, and office supplies, for establishing an NRDA command post within walking distance of the Incident Command Post;
- A secure staging area for sampling supplies and sample storage;
- A freezer or freezer space for storing environmental samples;
- Courier services for moving samples from remote locations;
- Possible aircraft and boat time for observing wildlife or collecting environmental samples;
- Personal protective equipment; and
- HAZWOPER Training for NRDA Field Teams.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUDING NRDA IN RESPONSE DRILLS AND EXERCISES

Because of the multiple benefits associated with coordination between NRDA and response activities (natural resource protection, personnel safety, data quality, and cost efficiencies), it is important that this working relationship function smoothly during a spill response. With that in mind, the West Coast JAT has two recommendations:

- **Training.** Response and NRDA personnel training should include concise modules describing NRDA and its effective coordination with the ICS or IMT [e.g., ICS and Federal On-Scene Coordinator Representative (FOSCR)] trainings; and
- **Drills and Exercises.** NRDA activities and coordination with the IMT should be included in drill/exercise scenarios as often as necessary to build smooth working relationship between the two groups and to develop effective response skills through the NRDA community. This is particularly true for larger exercises.

Recommendations for including various degrees of NRDA scenario complexity within spill drills and exercises are provided below.

# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Guidelines for Assessing Exposure and Impacts of Oil Spills on Marine Mammals

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# Guidelines for Assessing Exposure and Impacts of Oil Spills on Sea Turtles

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- guide effective oil spill response and mitigation;
  - inform Regional Response Teams and the development of Area Contingency Plans;
  - foster understanding across federal and state agencies that are responsible for sea turtles during oil spills;
  - provide scientific tools to evaluate exposure and injury to sea turtles;
- and
- serve as a starting point for the development of conceptual models and sampling plans in coordination with sea turtle experts and NRDA case teams.

The guidelines combine oil spill response and NRDA because of the considerable overlap in these efforts.