

Maryland



As a steward of our nation's coastal and marine environments, NOAA addresses immediate and long-term environmental threats through its Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R). Scientists are on call around-the-clock to provide the U.S. Coast Guard and other emergency responders with critical information to help minimize environmental damage caused by oil and hazardous chemical spills. Environmental experts assess ecosystems compromised by historic or ongoing contamination and work with other organizations to conduct remediation, restoration, and monitoring of critical natural resources.

Protecting and Restoring Maryland's Coastal and Marine Areas

NOAA trust resources in Maryland include over 7,500 miles of shoreline, which encompass extensive areas of wetlands, oyster reefs, and seagrass beds that serve as habitat for valuable fisheries. These natural resources provide recreational and economic benefits to millions of people, but the relatively shallow, enclosed Chesapeake Bay is particularly vulnerable to impacts from oil spills, chemical releases, and extensive nearshore development. The state map on the reverse page shows key response and restoration activities in the past year.

Emergency Response

In cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of Homeland Security, and other agencies, NOAA conducts emergency response and maritime security training in the Baltimore harbor. NOAA recently provided the U.S. Coast Guard and the state of Maryland with a new environmental sensitivity index, which includes information on coastal shoreline characteristics, biological resources, and human-use resources. The indices aid in prioritizing oil and chemical spill response to minimize environmental impact.

Assessment and Restoration

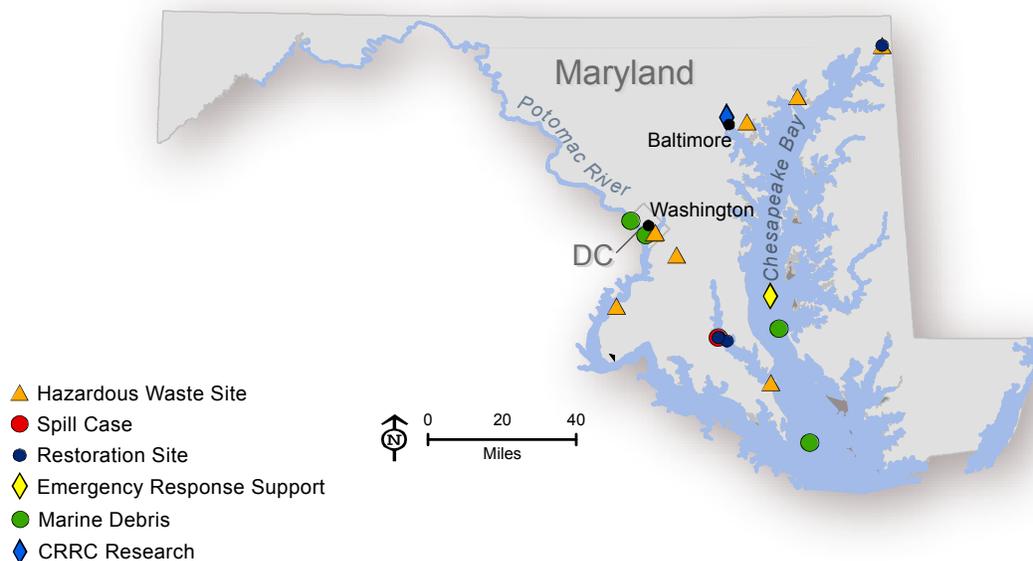
On April 7, 2000, a leak was detected in a 12-inch underground pipeline that supplies oil to the Potomac Electric Power Company Chalk Point generating station in Aquasco. Approximately 140,000 gallons of fuel oil spilled into Swanson Creek, a small tributary of the Patuxent River. The spill resulted in lost recreational use, damage to wetlands and beach shorelines, and injuries to birds and waterfowl, fish and shellfish, diamondback terrapins, and benthic communities. NOAA worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to assess the impacts from the spill, improve public access to recreation areas along the Patuxent River, and restore habitat for diamondback terrapins, oysters, and ruddy ducks.



Oil spill at Chalk Point

Marine Debris

NOAA is conducting a pilot project using remote sensing and imaging technologies to identify, map, and assess the impacts of derelict fishing gear and other submerged debris in selected areas of the Chesapeake Bay. An assessment of socioeconomic impacts will also be performed in partnership with the University of Maryland Chesapeake Biological Laboratory. The results of this pilot project will be used to develop a comprehensive effort to locate and remove detrimental derelict crab pots throughout the bay.



Research

NOAA collaborates with other federal, state, and local programs to develop innovative approaches to protecting marine and estuarine environments through research and synthesis of information. The Coastal Response Research Center (CRRC) brings together the resources of a research-oriented university and the field expertise of OR&R to conduct and oversee basic and applied research, conduct outreach, and encourage strategic partnerships in spill response, assessment, and restoration.

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,
please call (301) 713-2989 or visit our Web site at
response.restoration.noaa.gov**

Banner photo courtesy of Mary Hollinger, NODC biologist, NOAA

