

**ATTACHMENT 41 – NOAA NATURAL RESOURCES DAMAGE ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTION**



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## Natural Resource Damage Assessment

### Case: Enbridge Pipeline Release

Scientists from NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program arrived on scene on July 29 to coordinate with federal and state co-trustees and the responsible party to collect a variety of data on both unoiled and oiled natural resources that are critical to help inform a [natural resource damage assessment \(NRDA\)](#). Trustee agencies conduct the NRDA on the behalf of the public to determine the appropriate type and amount of restoration needed to compensate the public for injuries to or lost use of their natural resources from the oil spill and associated response activities. Data collected in the Kalamazoo River and adjacent habitats will help determine what natural resources have been injured and what human uses have been lost. Once the injuries and losses are known, trustees will work with the public to identify and select restoration projects to compensate the public by restoring, rehabilitating, replacing, or acquiring the equivalent of the natural resources lost or injured by the oil spill.

The trustees are working under the [Oil Pollution Act](#) and are in the pre-assessment phase. In this phase, the trustees determine whether injury to or lost use of public trust resources has occurred. This includes collecting time-sensitive data and reviewing scientific literature about the released substance and its impact on trust resources to determine the extent and severity of injury. NOAA is cooperating with federal and state co-trustees and representatives from the responsible party (Enbridge) to develop and implement baseline (pre-spill) and post-impact field studies for multiple resource categories. Currently, resources being assessed include—

- Surface water
- Fish and mussels
- River and bank habitats, including the sediment bed, marshes, and floodplains
- Human uses of natural resources (e.g., recreational fishing and boating)

The trustees are also examining data collected as part of the response and wildlife rescue, which includes surface water, shoreline, wildlife and other data.

NOAA led the development of protocols and survey forms for riverbank surveys to document the extent of oiling and to identify locations where oil may have penetrated floodplains. Followup assessment of the floodplains was completed. Teams of expert botanists from the trustees and Enbridge surveyed the vegetation along the riverbanks to characterize the dominant species and to identify significant (e.g. endangered or sensitive) species that might be affected by the spill or by response activities.



Shoreline oiling resulting from the Enbridge spill.

The trustees and Enbridge conducted three rounds of water sampling in the affected area and at upstream reference sites. Trustees and Enbridge inspected smallmouth bass and redhorse suckers for evidence of impacts from oil, and collected fish tissue and bile samples for chemical analysis. Trustees and Enbridge also collected mussel tissues and co-located sediment samples for chemical analysis to ascertain whether oil is sinking and affecting the river bottom.

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