

2024 - 2028

Strategic Plan



OFFICE OF RESPONSE AND RESTORATION



*Developing scientific solutions to keep
coasts clean from threats of oil, chemicals,
and marine debris*



Our office has evolved in its breadth and focus over our 25 years with this name and nearly 50 years from our origins. The next five years demand continued adaptation to apply our expertise and mandates to emerging challenges.

Message from the Director

Our nation's coasts and the global ocean are abundant providers—a primary source for the oxygen we breathe, a buffer for our climate, a habitat for biodiversity, a provider of sustenance, a channel for commerce, and a source of beauty and recreation. Our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes are also bearing early and profound effects from climate change and under increasing demands from multiple uses, with resulting episodic shocks and chronic stressors often placing disproportionate burdens on underserved and vulnerable communities. Anticipating and adapting to these changes is a key strategic need across society, including the work of the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R).

OR&R delivers critical services to address rising demands, focused on responding to challenges from disasters and pollution by oil, chemicals, and marine debris. Our pollution and disaster mandates provide the backbone for our mission — even as we evolve our services and the customers we support — to the changing nature of coastal threats and hazards. Episodic weather and climate disasters demand more from our disaster planning, coordination, and continuous improvement portfolio as well as impact the nature of pollution demands across OR&R's mission set. OR&R's recovery portfolio fosters stronger connections between the work of incident response and recovery, as well as promotes integration of longer-time horizon resilience needs into recovery. Together these services support coasts that are more resilient to episodic events such as natural disasters, spills, and other coastal hazards.

This plan sets forth four goals for OR&R over the next five years to: meet the changing demands on our mission, deliver services in an equitable manner for the diverse populations we serve, approach our communications with cohesion that integrates our mandates to address these demands, and develop our skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce to deliver our mission and sustain our core capabilities.

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SCOTT LUNDGREN

OR&R Director



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About OR&R and the Path Forward

OR&R Vision

The nation's ocean, coasts, and communities are resilient—protected and restored from environmental threats for future generations.

OR&R Mission

To protect and restore ocean and coastal resources from the impacts of threats such as oil, chemicals, marine debris, and disasters to benefit the environment, public, and economy.

Core Values

Integrity, service, and respect reflect the core values of OR&R. To effectively conduct the work of our mission, OR&R embraces these values and incorporates them into all of our actions. **Integrity** means providing transparent, accurate information through our services and scientific support. We believe our primary responsibility is to **serve** the public by protecting and restoring the natural environment from environmental threats. OR&R fosters a culture of **respect** for our colleagues and those we serve in order to build and maintain trust. These values are essential to achieving success in our mission.

Operating Principles

OR&R operates under a number of principles that guide our decisions and actions to meet our mission and vision. The first principle is **safety**, which is essential to protecting our most valuable asset—our people. **Collaboration** is our second principle, which is necessary for effective work with our colleagues, partners, and key groups. Third, OR&R strives to be a **national leader in our scientific expertise and support**, a principle that has fostered trust with partners and the public. The fourth principle is **stewardship**. OR&R is entrusted with protecting and restoring natural resources; it is foundational to all of our science and services. Our fifth and final principle is that we are **always ready**. OR&R supports preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and restoration for a variety of threats to the environment and must maintain a state of readiness to accomplish this mission.

Mandates and Services

Our mission is to protect and restore ocean and coastal resources from the impacts of threats such as oil, chemicals, marine debris, and disasters to **benefit the environment, public, and economy**. This mission is based upon a set of mandates and authorities that guide the work we do every day.

Several are specific to pollutant types and guide our work or inclusion in wider government systems. Ensuring continued preparedness to multiple threats and hazards is a theme that reaches across OR&R's mission. The preparedness mandates that conclude this section are broadly applicable across agencies, and are important unifying concepts that are woven throughout our mission.



U.S. COAST GUARD, COURTESY OF CLEAN GULF ASSOCIATES



U.S. COAST GUARD

Oil and Chemical Spill Response

The nation has a comprehensive set of authorities for **preparedness, response, and restoration** from oil and hazardous substance spills and waste sites based upon the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) of 1990, and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

These laws created a comprehensive prevention, response, liability, and compensation regime for **oil and hazardous substance spills** further detailed in regulation, including the National Oil and Hazardous Substance Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) and Natural Resource Damage Assessment rules for oil and hazardous substances. Together, these laws and regulations along with several Presidential Directives pertaining to disaster preparedness and response assign the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other agencies a range of functions that comprise this comprehensive system.

KEY SERVICES:

- Provide scientific expertise and coordination of NOAA services to support incident preparedness and response
- During incident preparedness and response, represent NOAA trust resources
- Partner and communicate with federal and state agencies to coordinate capabilities and advise the Incident Command
- Develop pollution fate, modeling, and response information and planning tools



Oil and Chemical Natural Resource Restoration

Under laws such as OPA, CWA, CERCLA, and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, NOAA is a **trustee for the public's natural resources**. OR&R is charged with protecting and restoring these resources when impacted by oil and chemical spills, hazardous waste sites, and vessel groundings in national marine sanctuaries.

Accompanying and extending beyond response and remedial action is the natural resource damage assessment process to **restore injured natural resources and lost public use** to make the environment and public whole following an oil or hazardous substance spill or substantial threat.

KEY SERVICES:

- Use science to understand and account for the effects of hazardous waste pollution, oil spills, and ship groundings
- Hold polluters accountable for natural resource injuries and recover funds for restoration through the NOAA Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP)
- Measure impacts to habitats, natural resources, and their services, including human uses
- Develop cutting-edge assessment techniques
- Create Damage Assessment and Restoration Plans (DARP)
- Lead and coordinate Natural Resource Trustee teams
- Operate spatial data and environmental data warehouse systems from response through restoration

Marine Debris

In 2006, Congress authorized the NOAA Marine Debris Program within OR&R via the Marine Debris Act. This Act requires the program to “identify, determine sources of, **assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris** and address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the economy of the United States, the marine environment, and navigation safety.”

Based on amendments and reauthorizations in 2012, 2018, and 2020, the NOAA Marine Debris Program's components have expanded to include **national and regional coordination** to address marine debris, development of interagency plans to respond to severe marine debris events, and support for international efforts to combat marine debris.

Most recently, the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act of 2020 enhanced U.S. domestic programs to address marine debris and required NOAA to establish a Genius Prize for Save Our Seas innovation and complete a number of studies and reports. The Save Our Seas 2.0 Act also established the Marine Debris Foundation, an independent charitable and nonprofit organization, the purpose of which includes augmenting the efforts of NOAA's Marine Debris Program.

KEY SERVICES:

- Serve as the U.S. federal lead to address the issue of marine debris through prevention, removal, assessment, and coordination activities
- Execute \$150M over five years (2022-2026) under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for marine debris assessment, prevention, mitigation, and removal
- Support community-based removal efforts
- Conduct outreach, education, and behavior change activities to raise awareness about the impacts of marine debris
- Support research efforts to advance the scientific understanding of marine debris
- Conduct marine debris monitoring efforts
- Coordinate actions with state and regional partners
- Prepare for and respond to, debris generated by extreme weather events
- Provide international leadership on the issue of marine debris



Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

All of the mandates that drive the work of OR&R have elements that relate to disasters and emergencies. We provide scientific and technical support to **prevent, prepare for, and respond to marine pollution** as well as protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems from the impacts of marine pollution.

In addition to our specific pollution mandates, we derive our emergency management mandates for support to OR&R and the National Ocean Service (NOS) primarily from three Presidential Directives—National Preparedness Goal, Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8); Domestic Incident Response, Presidential Policy Directive 44 (PPD-44); and Management of Domestic Incidents, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) as well as related laws including 6 U.S.C 753(b), Federal Preparedness. These documents mandate specific **preparedness measures and emergency response procedures** to be undertaken by federal departments and agencies to ensure the nation is prepared for all-hazard response.

All of these mandates drive the work that we do to provide support to lead response agencies by integrating into response systems at command posts, coordination centers, and field offices for our own missions or in providing support for NOS capability.

KEY SERVICES:

- Prepare NOS and partners to respond to and recover from pollution events and natural disasters
- Provide training in technical and scientific elements that support incident response
- Conduct exercises and drills to enhance the preparedness posture
- Grant funding and regional support for **coastal communities' preparedness** activities
- Compile lessons learned from incidents for continuous improvement
- Support planning and tool development
- Oversee operations and maintenance of the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Disaster Response Center

Organization

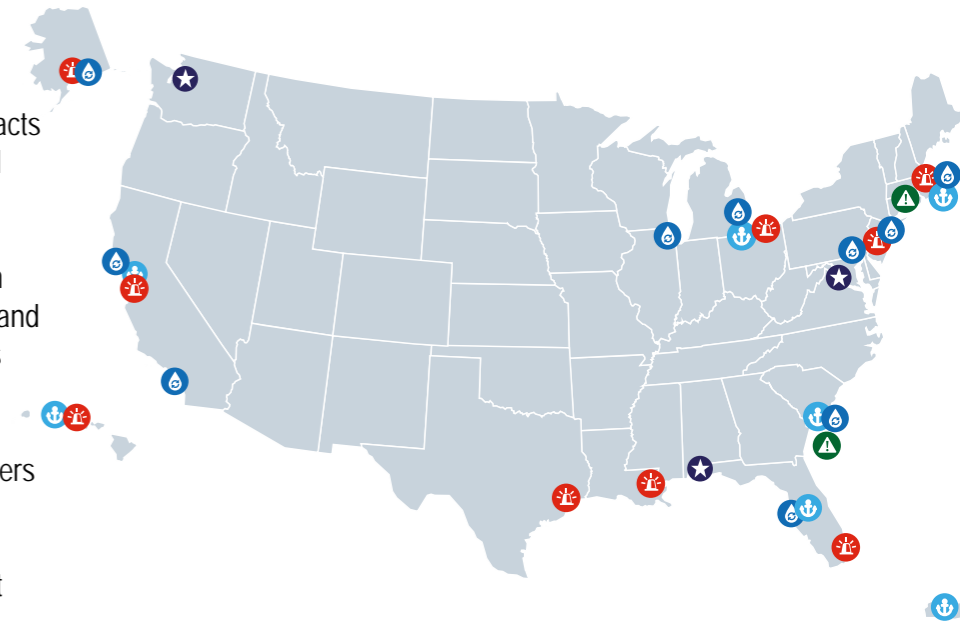
Our dedicated team of employees and affiliates work collaboratively to advance our mission and address **evolving environmental threats** to our coastal communities such as oil, chemicals, marine debris, and disasters.



OR&R staff are located around the country and **work with local and regional partners** to address the impacts of environmental threats to our coastal communities.

By living and working collaboratively in these regions, we can directly understand the challenges that these communities face and apply our expertise and leverage other regional assets and partners to support local decision-makers more efficiently.

We are made up of **five divisions** that advance our core mission capabilities:



ASSESSMENT AND RESTORATION DIVISION

Evaluate and restore coastal and estuarine habitats, resources, and services impacted by hazardous waste releases, oil spills, and vessel groundings.



BUSINESS OPERATIONS DIVISION

Provide vital mission support services enabling execution of the OR&R mission.



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM

Strengthen existing operational capabilities to ensure NOS and partners have the tools to plan for and respond to disasters.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE DIVISION

Provide critical scientific support to protect our coastal communities following natural disasters and other incidents that result in marine pollution.



MARINE DEBRIS DIVISION

Lead national and support international efforts to prevent, remove, research, and respond to marine debris to reduce its impacts on the coastal environment, navigation, safety, and the economy.



Who We Serve

Service is at the heart of what we do in OR&R. To support important regulatory requirements and accomplish our mission, OR&R relies on leveraging our partnerships. We provide our expertise, training, consultation, data management, coordination, and financial resources to partners who add value and advance the work we do.

By working together, we are more efficient and effective and make our collective resources go even farther. OR&R maintains relationships with partners in federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local governments; academia; nongovernmental organizations; and the private sector to help us achieve this critical mission.

Strategic Landscape

Looking ahead, OR&R will face numerous challenges—some new and emerging, some chronic or persistent—to accomplishing our mission. To ensure our continued success and overcome these challenges, we will need to **adapt, innovate, and embrace** future opportunities.

The examples on the next page exemplify the types of **challenges** and **opportunities** OR&R will need to navigate to accomplish its mission.

Challenges

CLIMATE CHANGE

Extreme weather events will create more pollution and complicate cleanup efforts. Rising seas as well as increases in flooding, fires, and extreme heat put more chemical and oil facilities at risk. Decreasing Arctic sea ice is encouraging increased activity in an area that is logistically challenging to operate in. As the climate changes, ecosystems will change in response, making it more difficult to maintain baseline information to accurately assess and prevent damage from pollution.

VULNERABILITY AND EQUITY

An increasing percentage of the U.S. population lives in coastal regions, increasing overall vulnerability. However, this vulnerability is not equally distributed. Many underserved populations are faced with multiple intersecting challenges, such as limited emergency infrastructure and reduced accessibility of government resources. These compounding disparities place some communities at extreme risk both of encountering coastal hazards and of experiencing more damaging impacts when those hazards arise.

NEW AND CHANGING POLLUTANTS AND DEBRIS

Innovation drives the nation's economic prosperity, with new fuels, chemicals, and materials being developed to address societal and environmental challenges. For example, we are seeing spills of biofuels, renewable fuels, plastic pellets, and shipping containers. When spills happen, novel tools or methods may be required to minimize environmental and societal impacts.

PRIORITIZATION

With finite resources and increasing challenges on many fronts, we will need to be strategic in how we prioritize our efforts in order to maximize the benefits of our work for the nation.

Opportunities

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

New technologies such as artificial intelligence and uncrewed systems hold significant potential to transform our work. Science breakthroughs may also help us address longstanding challenges and questions, such as improved methods for handling spills in the Arctic or deep ocean. We can harness these advances to improve all facets of our preparedness, response, and restoration mission.

DIVERSE, ENGAGED WORKFORCE

Our people are our greatest asset. Their passion, expertise, and dedication are the driving force behind our success. The more we can ensure our workforce leverages the full diversity of our nation and foster an inclusive culture that motivates all staff to their full potential, the greater our success will be.

COLLABORATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

OR&R has longstanding partnerships with other federal agencies and we also collaborate with state, tribal, nongovernmental, and private organizations to amplify our impact. Working together with other organizations that have complementary missions and goals, we can extend our ability to keep our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes safe from pollution, debris, and other hazards.



Strategic Goals

The 2024-2028 OR&R Strategic Plan is designed to help us continue collaborative efforts to **advance our mission** and meet the mandates set before us while addressing the needs that coastal communities face today.

Our four Strategic Goals reflect the vision of the Department of Commerce (DOC), NOAA, and NOS to:

- Meet demands of pollution and weather-related threats and impacts in the face of coastal change
- Make equity intentional in the delivery of our services
- Strengthen engagement with partners and key groups to effectively communicate and advance the OR&R mission to better meet the needs of coastal communities
- Develop a more skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce to support and implement the OR&R mission

Our efforts to advance these goals over the next five years will enhance our ability to sustain our core mission capabilities to protect and restore ocean and coastal resources.

GOAL 1

Meet demands of **pollution and weather-related threats and impacts** in the face of coastal change

Global climate change is generating environmental patterns that pose unique challenges to OR&R’s work to minimize impacts from marine pollution and disasters. Larger and more damaging storms threaten a wider swath of U.S. infrastructure, potentially creating new pollution sources and impacting new geographies. Climate-induced ecosystem changes will complicate efforts to maintain baseline environmental information and restore areas impacted by pollution.

Continued U.S. economic growth and innovation will also require OR&R to find solutions to emerging pollution risks, such as oil spills in polar regions, increasing plastic pollution, and novel chemicals. With the unprecedented rate of change in the world around us, it is more important than ever for OR&R to evaluate how we evolve as an office to effectively meet these changing demands and provide solutions that allow communities to increase the pace of recovery.



OBJECTIVES

Execute and sustain core mission capabilities to protect and restore ocean and coastal resources

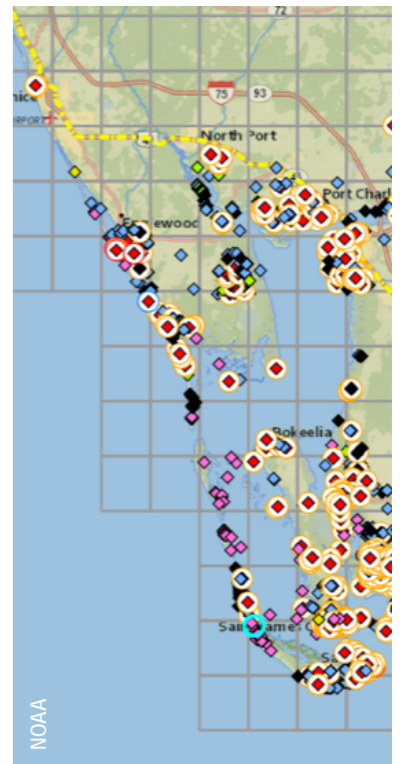
OR&R’s mission is vital to the nation. Our work to protect and restore ocean and coastal resources from the impacts of threats such as oil, chemicals, marine debris, and disasters delivers significant benefits to the environment, public, and economy. To ensure future success, OR&R will regularly review and update its service offerings so it can sustainably deliver the core set of capabilities that provide the greatest possible value to our constituents. OR&R will also analyze and plan for potential risks to ensure it can continue to execute its mission even under adverse operating conditions.

Advance OR&R scientific understanding of emerging threats and needs

In the face of rapid coastal change, OR&R must maintain a firm understanding of emerging threats to meet new and evolving demands for our services. Advances in ocean science and technology provide opportunities to better understand, predict, and reduce coastal impacts from pollution and disasters. OR&R will identify and assess emerging and evolving science and needs associated with coastal pollutants and weather-related events to determine how to best support response and restoration of impacted areas.

Enhance capabilities and expertise to meet demands of new threats and extended, large scale, and more frequent events to support more resilient coastal communities

Existing plans for natural disasters, marine debris, and spills rapidly become outdated in the face of new threats and extended, large-scale, and more frequent incidents. As we advance our scientific understanding of emerging threats and needs, OR&R’s tools and services must continuously adapt to support community resilience. OR&R will enhance its emergency management capabilities in the coming years to better address emerging and intensifying threats.



GOAL 2

Make **equity intentional** in the delivery of our services

Historically underserved populations have disproportionately experienced the brunt of impacts from environmental change and degradation. OR&R shares the NOAA and NOS goals to ensure our efforts equitably benefit communities across the nation.

OR&R will improve its support for underserved communities that are impacted by coastal environmental threats so that these communities are resilient and able to recover from environmental impacts more effectively.



BASF CORPORATION (BASF)

OBJECTIVES

Identify barriers to community awareness of and ability to access OR&R products, resources, and services

OR&R offers a range of products and services to facilitate preparedness, response, and recovery for environmental threats in the areas and communities we serve. OR&R can improve delivery of its products and services to reduce barriers of language, technological constraints, and other factors. OR&R will assess its catalog of products and services to identify which have the greatest barriers to awareness and accessibility for underrepresented communities in order for us to address them.

Employ secure, new technologies and methods to further expand access to OR&R products and services

Once OR&R has identified potential barriers to access of our products, services, and resources, we can work with partners and key groups to determine what solutions are available to address them. Visual, language, technological, and other barriers prevent individuals from using material that is only provided in a single format or location. Diversifying the presentation of OR&R resources based on the community needs will allow us to expand our reach.

Better engage underserved communities to inform decision making and service delivery

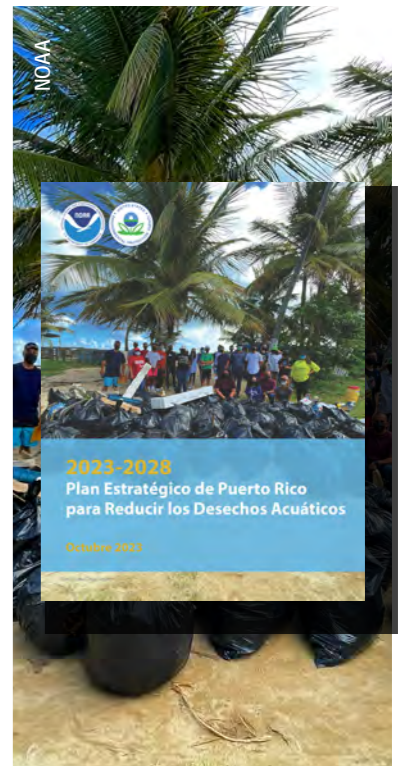
OR&R implements its mission of protecting and restoring ocean and coastal resources to benefit the public. However, what the public wants or needs may not be sufficiently incorporated into OR&R mission execution. To be more responsive to the public, particularly underserved communities, OR&R will seek more and better engagement as part of mission implementation. By incorporating community input into decision making and service delivery, OR&R will more effectively and equitably support the public it serves.

Provide greater support (e.g., products, services, grants) to underserved communities

Underserved communities may not equitably receive the benefits of OR&R programs. In addition to better engaging with underserved communities, OR&R will consider delivery of its mission so that these communities are fairly supported. OR&R can better support this objective in instances where OR&R has some discretion on location of work and degree of involvement.



STATE OF NEW JERSEY



NOAA

GOAL 3

Strengthen **engagement with constituents** to effectively communicate and advance the OR&R mission to better meet the needs of coastal communities

OR&R has an opportunity to unite in our messaging and approach to environmental threats facing coastal communities, better engage with partners to stay informed on needs, and enhance communication about the work that we do. A stronger unified message will allow for an integration of our mandates and capabilities to meet current and emerging needs.

Through enhanced engagement and a commitment to public service, OR&R will strengthen partnerships and facilitate communication to connect the public to key resources and expertise. Implementing intentional and consistent communication strategies while strategically building relationships and identifying regional needs will allow OR&R to advance its mission, reach new audiences, and better serve the American public.



PERMIT NUMBER P11MM-2023-005

PAPAHAŪMOKUĀKEA MARINE DEBRIS PROJECT

OBJECTIVES

Develop and implement an integrated communications strategy that unites all mission focus areas

OR&R will develop and implement a comprehensive OR&R story for internal and external communications. All OR&R managers and staff, and where possible partners, will be encouraged to use and promote OR&R language. By sharing a more comprehensive picture of the office in engagement opportunities, OR&R's work will reach new audiences resulting in increased awareness and benefits for key products and services that we provide to the nation.

Strengthen and develop effective and strategic partnerships and outreach that are mutually beneficial and advance the OR&R mission

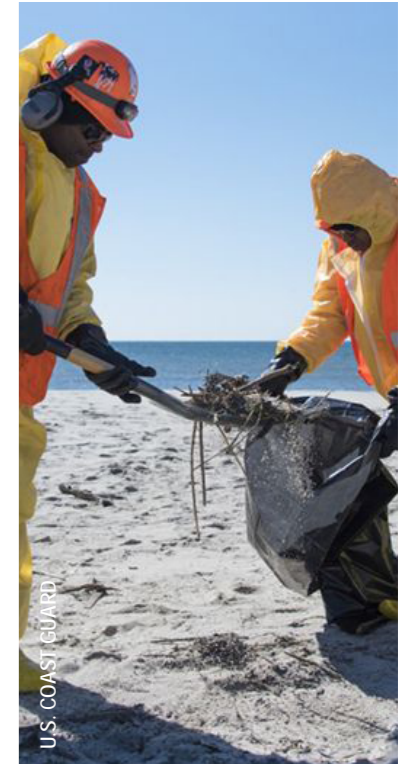
OR&R will strive to build on our mission through development of strategic partnerships and outreach to other organizations. OR&R will strengthen and develop effective partnerships that are mutually beneficial and advance the OR&R mission.

Deploy a consistent engagement strategy with leadership at all levels of the government

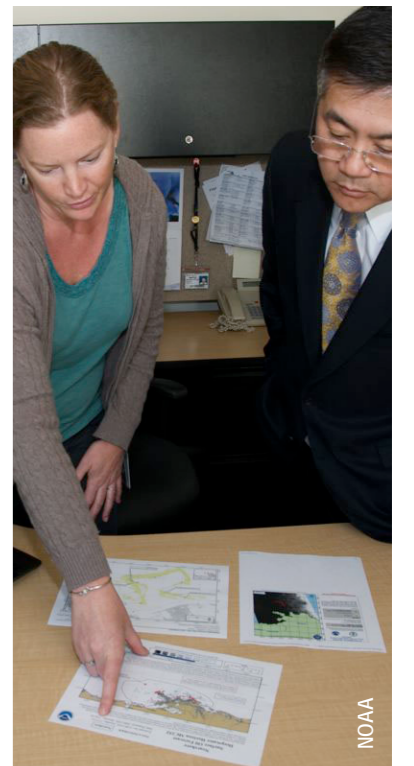
In order to effectively demonstrate and articulate the full OR&R value, OR&R will develop a biannual Congressional engagement strategy that ties in all mission focus areas. We will routinely and effectively communicate accomplishments, program efficiencies, and opportunities to NOS, NOAA, DOC, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congress and ensure messages are evident via digital communications.

Strengthen community engagement and improve communication to identify national and regional needs and connect the public to OR&R resources and expertise

Through enhanced community engagement and intentional communication before, during, and after events, OR&R will identify national and regional needs and better connect the public to information, OR&R resources, and expertise. Maintaining and building community relationships while actively working to meet public needs will help demonstrate OR&R program value and garner support.



U.S. COAST GUARD



NOAA

GOAL 4

Develop a more **skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce** to support and implement the OR&R mission

Through a focus on the people of the organization, OR&R will strive to make advancements to build a more skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce to meet our mission. From diverse hiring strategies to the development of employees, strengthened total worker health, and enhanced cross-office communications, OR&R will focus on positioning our workforce for growth, inclusion, and resilience.



OBJECTIVES

Expand professional development opportunities for staff

OR&R will provide opportunities targeted to the growth and development of OR&R staff. By participating in multi-faceted professional development opportunities, staff can use those skills for both personal development and expanding their horizon of influence on the organization.

Build a more diverse workforce that mirrors the communities we serve

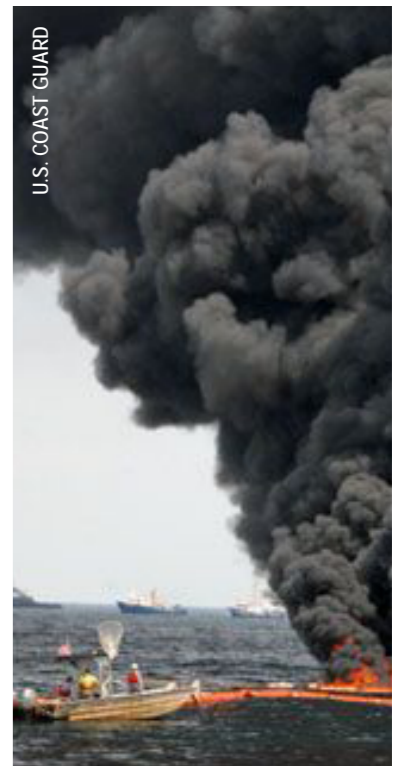
OR&R will develop policies to support the hiring and retention of a diverse workforce that is representative of the public we serve. We will focus on recruitment and hiring practices that help us attract and onboard underrepresented employees. A diverse workforce will allow OR&R to be more resilient with diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences to solve the challenges we face.

Promote workforce sustainability, safety, and wellness

It is essential to maintain a healthy and capable workforce in order to fulfill our mission to the public. OR&R will foster a workplace that prioritizes the wellness, inclusivity, safety, and sustainability of the staff.

Enhance cross-divisional collaboration

OR&R will devise an approach for more intentional cross-divisional communication and collaboration. Staff will be encouraged to proactively explore connections between their projects and other efforts happening in their region to provide a more integrated view of OR&R's work protecting and restoring coastal resources from pollution and disasters. This will result in longer-term success and enhance our ability to tell a cohesive OR&R story while better connecting all staff to the OR&R mission.



Implementation

OR&R's **future success** depends on our ability to prioritize the products and services that provide the most value, and develop and deliver them efficiently. OR&R will use this plan to prioritize our work and focus our resources. It will be used to support the development of annual operating plans for our key mission areas as we strive to achieve our future vision. OR&R will also regularly review and update our service offerings to ensure we can sustainably deliver the core set of mission-mandated capabilities that provide the greatest possible value to constituents.

For our day-to-day operations, OR&R will use the plan to support our efforts **to sustain and modernize mission delivery and operations**. To optimize our performance, OR&R will look to take advantage of the latest technological advances and operational best practices, and will work to standardize and improve our internal operations. As part of this, OR&R will **assess and address** risks to our ability to deliver core capabilities, prioritize product and service offerings to ensure sustainability, and safeguard unique institutional knowledge for continued success.



www.response.restoration.noaa.gov

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