

# St. Louis River U.S. Steel Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration: Overview

## WHAT IS NRDAR?

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) is a regulatory process to determine the amount and type of restoration needed to compensate the public for injuries to natural resources resulting from the release of hazardous substances into the environment.

Natural resources include the land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater, drinking water, and other resources that belong to, or are managed by, the U.S., States, or Tribes.



In NRDAR, an injury has occurred when contamination decreases a resource's ability to provide services (either to other resources or to humans). For example, contamination may cause lower nesting success in birds, prevent wetlands from supporting vegetation, or result in public health consumption advisories.

**GOAL** = Restoration of natural resources to the condition they would be in if the release of hazardous substances had not occurred.

Compensation for the public is calculated in projects or dollars necessary to implement the restoration.

## HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM SITE CLEANUP?

**NRDAR:** The purpose of NRDAR is restoration. The amount and type of restoration needed is based on lost resource services over time (past, present, future) resulting from contamination, accounting for remedial actions. NRDAR is not a second cleanup; it occurs in addition to the cleanup.

**Cleanup (also called Remedy):** The purpose of the remedial process is to protect human health and the environment from further unacceptable harm based on the risk of adverse impacts. Remedial actions do not address past natural resource injuries and may leave some residual contamination in the environment.

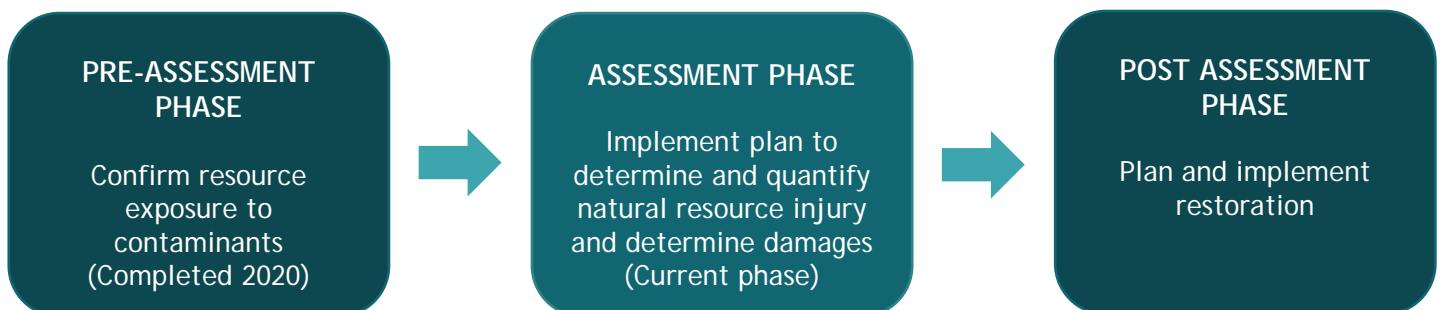
## WHO ARE THE NATURAL RESOURCE TRUSTEES?

Natural Resource Trustees are federal and state agencies and tribes who act on behalf of the public when there is injury to, destruction of, or loss of natural resources as a result of releases of hazardous substances.

Working together as a Council, the U.S. Steel Trustees are:

- 1854 Treaty Authority
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- State of Minnesota
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife

## NRDAR STEPS



# St. Louis River U.S. Steel Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration: Draft Assessment Plan

## AREA OVERVIEW

- ~900 acres of terrestrial and aquatic habitat located near Duluth, MN along the St. Louis River
- Diverse habitats including forest, grasslands, wetlands, and freshwater that support a variety of wildlife such as invertebrates, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals
- Recreational opportunities such as fishing, boating, and wildlife observation
- St. Louis River estuary is important to the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) people: located within ceded territories where treaty rights have been retained, supports culturally significant resources, and provides cultural services

## SITE OPERATIONS

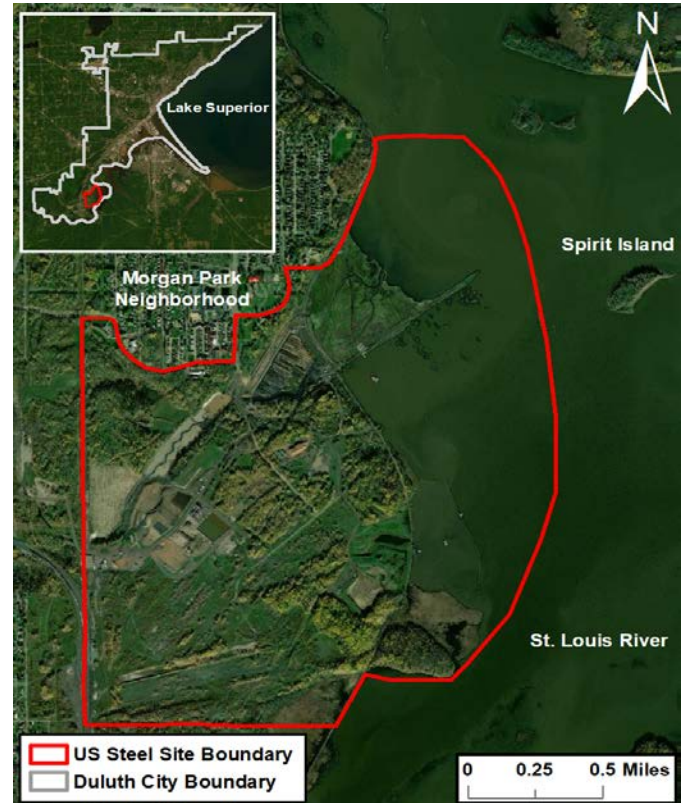
- U.S. Steel operated on the site between 1915 and 1986
- Operations included coke production, iron and steel making, casting, hot and cold finishing, and galvanizing
- These operations released contaminants into the environment: polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and metals like chromium, lead, and mercury
- Natural resources have been exposed to and negatively affected by contamination released from U.S. Steel

## WHAT IS AN ASSESSMENT PLAN?

The Assessment Plan describes how the U.S Steel Trustees are assessing natural resources injuries and service losses resulting from U.S. Steel-related contamination, and how they plan to determine damages and restoration of injured resources.

Assessment activities may include:

- Analyses of existing contaminant concentration data and toxicity literature
- Studies that may fill additional data needs
- Identification of contaminant environmental pathways
- Determination of injury to aquatic and terrestrial resources
- Assessment of ecological, recreational, and Tribal losses
- Evaluation of remedial impacts



## HOW CAN THE PUBLIC BE INVOLVED?

Public participation is a key component in the NRDAR process. The U.S. Steel Natural Resource Trustees encourage you to review and provide comments on the Draft Assessment Plan.

Public comment period: Feb 6 to March 23, 2023

Available online: <https://www.fws.gov/project/st-louis-river-us-steel-duluth-minnesota-natural-resource-damage-assessment-and-restoration>

Requests for hard copies and comments on the plan can be sent to:

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
3815 American Blvd. East  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
Or: [USSteelNRDAR\\_comments@fws.gov](mailto:USSteelNRDAR_comments@fws.gov)

After the public comment period, the Trustees will address public comments and finalize the Assessment Plan.

