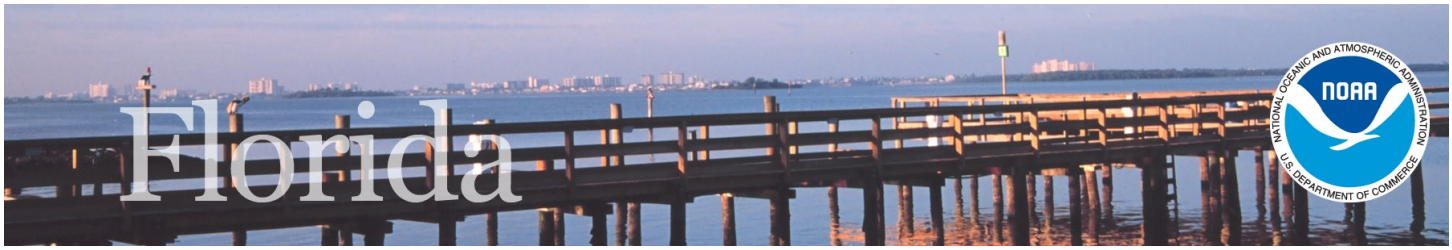


As a steward of our nation's coastal and marine environments, NOAA addresses immediate and long-term environmental threats through its Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R). Scientists are on call around-the-clock to provide the U.S. Coast Guard and other emergency responders with critical information 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 Florida's Coastal and Marine Areas

NOAA trust resources in Florida include 1,800 miles of coastline, including 1,200 miles of sandy beaches. It is the only state to have an extensive shallow coral reef system near its coast. Mangroves, seagrass, and salt marsh are critical to the health of estuaries that support more than 70% of Florida's important recreational and commercial fisheries. Recurring ship groundings, in addition to oil and chemical spills at Florida's 14 deep water ports, put marine resources and the tourism economy at risk. The state map on the reverse page shows key response and restoration activities in the past year.

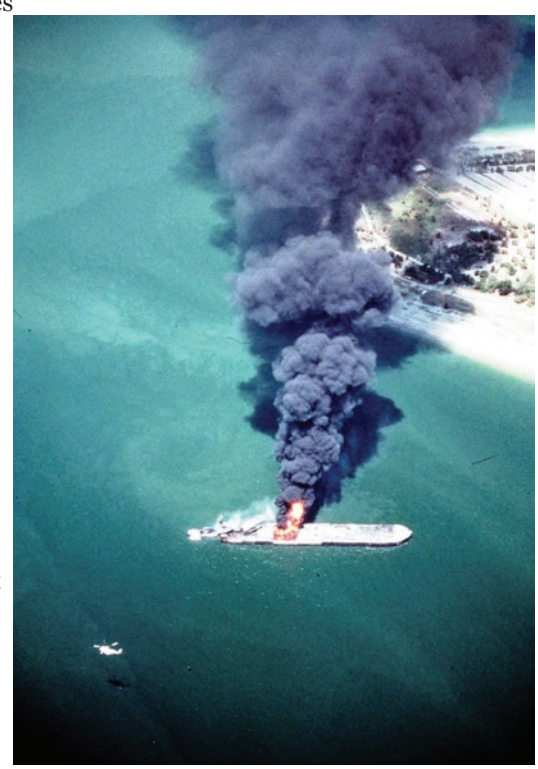
Emergency Response

On August 10, 1993, two barges and a freighter collided in a shipping channel south of Mullet Key in Tampa Bay. One of the barges, the *Bouchard 155*, was damaged at the port bow and spilled approximately 32,000 gallons of jet fuel, diesel, and gasoline and 330,000 gallons of heavy fuel oil into Tampa Bay. NOAA provided response coordinators with daily weather, tides, currents, and trajectory updates. NOAA's Aircraft Operations Center, based at MacDill Air Force Base, provided helicopter support for overflights and provided temporary hanger storage for response equipment. NOAA also provided expertise on environmental and health issues related to cleanup and ecosystem protection.

Bouchard 155 *oil spill,Tampa Bay*

Assessment and Restoration

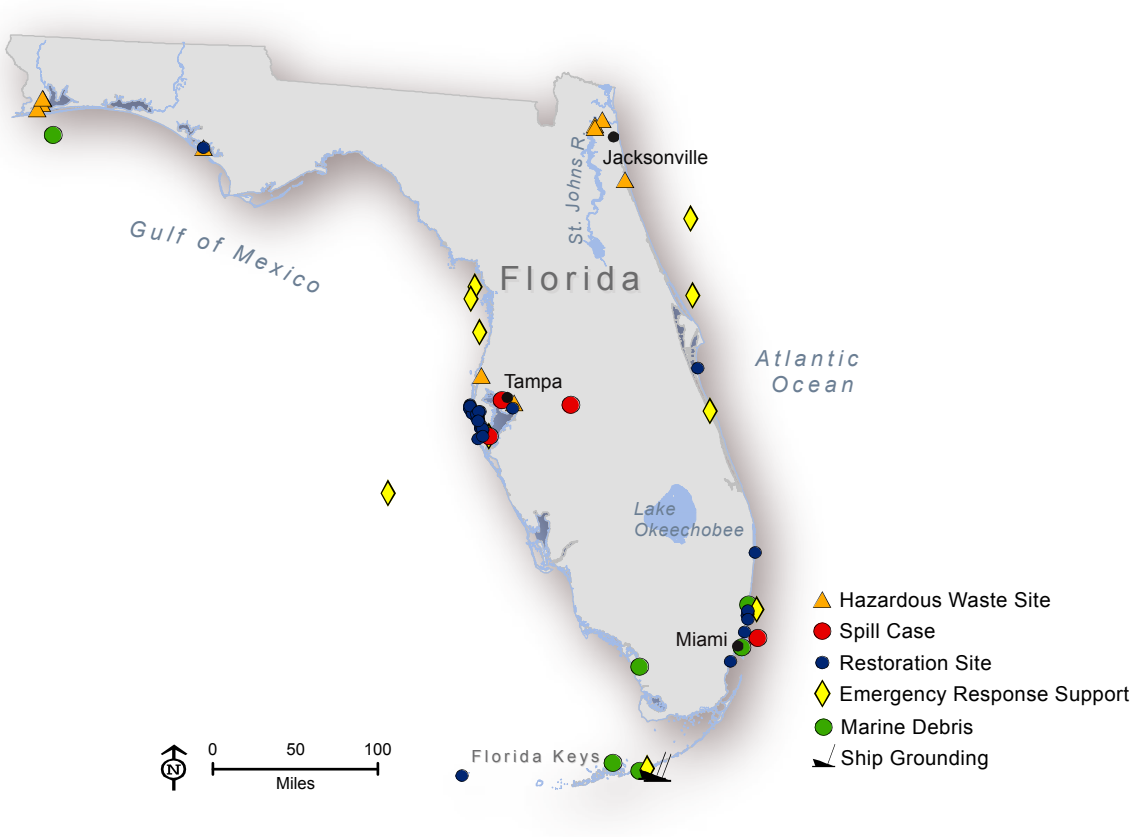
As a result of the *Bouchard 155* spill in 1993, oil fouled 13 miles of beaches and caused injury to birds, sea turtles, mangrove habitat, seagrass, salt marshes, shellfish beds, water column resources, and bottom sediments. NOAA has worked with other natural resource trustees to assess impact and implement more than 20 restoration projects to address or compensate for ecosystem damage.



Bouchard 155 *oil spill,Tampa Bay*

Marine Debris

NOAA is working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection to remove "lobster condos" or "casitas" and other marine debris from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The casitas smother the seafloor by shading out the substrate and concentrate the lobsters, allowing for increased harvest through illegal fishing. The debris is located using side-scan sonar, then removed for proper disposal. Through education and outreach, NOAA works to inform the public about the harm done by marine debris.



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 Mr. William Folsom, NOAA, NMFS