

Update as of 1200, July 9, 2023

Stillwater Train Derailment Press Release

Reed Point, Montana (July 9, 2023) – 12:00pm

Cleanup crews continue expanding asphalt material collection efforts. Crews collected over 11,000 pounds of asphalt material as of Saturday night, bringing the cumulative total thus far to approximately 58,000 pounds. Heat and dehydration are becoming increasingly important safety concerns for cleanup crews as material collection is often physically demanding.

Whitewater Rescue Institute (WRI) provided a safety boat near Reed Point during the Yellowstone Boat Float. WRI is leading the on-water recovery efforts for the derailment and recognized the need for a safety boat at this popular event to alert floaters to the downstream hazard at the active railroad bridge construction site. WRI provided two rescues and four assists during the event.

The boat ramp at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus will be closed for public use, as of July 8.

Improvement work at the park—including updates on the road and boat ramp—is underway. Assessment and cleanup teams will be actively launching boats at the ramp after the improvement work is completed, creating potentially hazardous conditions for the public. The hand-launch boat ramp near the Highway 78 bridge will still be available for smaller watercraft use, and the campground will remain open.

Crews are beginning improvement work at Buffalo Mirage Fishing Access Site near Laurel in preparation for expanding clean-up and assessment work further downstream. The public should be advised that heavy equipment will be working at the site, creating potentially hazardous conditions. As of July 9, the site will remain open for public use, but this is subject to change.

Environmental crews continue to look for impacted wildlife daily. On July 8, a dead bull snake and a dead yellow warbler were found, bringing the total confirmed impacted wildlife to five.

EPA's river operations dashboard on the incident website has up-to-date information on the amount of collected asphalt material and assessment locations. Members of the public can also view assessment data showing how far downstream material has been observed. River mile markers are shown on the map for reference. The river operations dashboard is available online: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/719ee8d6c1d743e89b95ee946d1d4d45/page/River-Operations/>

Unified Command plans to issue an additional press release mid-week.

Members of the public are encouraged to continue reporting sightings of any asphalt material they observe to the email below and continue to avoid touching the material with bare skin. This email can also be used for any impacted landowners to start the process of filing a claim. To report observed asphalt material, submit information to: rpderailment@mtrail.com.

Anyone with information about oiled wildlife are encouraged to call the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) Response Hotline at 888-ASK-OWCN (888-275-6926).

For more information, please visit the response websites:

- <https://response.epa.gov/stillwatertrainderailment>
- <https://www.stillwatercountymt.gov/train-derailment/>

This response is operating under a Unified Command which enables different jurisdictions and organizations to jointly manage and direct incident activities. Unified Command for this incident is comprised of representatives from Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Montana Rail Link.

