

Update as of 1300, July 7, 2023

Stillwater Train Derailment Press Release

Reed Point, Montana (July 7, 2023) – 12:30pm

Cleanup crews continue expanding asphalt material collection efforts. Additional teams are onsite, bringing the total number of on water personnel to 150. As of Thursday night, approximately 35,000 pounds of asphalt material have been recovered. Typically at oil spills, not all material that enters the water is recoverable. This is why source control, in this case removing the rail cars with material still in them, was a high priority. Regardless of the amount spilled in the river, the priorities remain to remove as much material as feasible, reducing the physical risk to animals, and to minimize the impact of the cleanup on the ecosystem.

The Unified Command team continues to gather information about the total amount of asphalt material that entered the river. Roughly 1 million pounds of asphalt material were in the six rail cars that entered the river. Two rail cars are still relatively full, two are half full and two are relatively empty. Initial rough estimates for the maximum amount thought to have entered the river is 500,000 pounds. After the recovered rail cars are cut open and the material can be removed and weighed, Unified Command will have a more accurate estimate on the amount of asphalt material that entered the river.

EPA's river operations dashboard allows journalists and the public to view locations needing cleanup, locations being cleaned and locations that have been cleaned or cleaned and cleared by the assessment teams. Cleanup teams are currently focused on the first four to ten river miles downstream from the site. Unified Command is planning boat launch improvement work at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus and Buffalo Mirage Fishing Access Site (Sportsman's Park) in Laurel to support increased boat traffic for assessment and cleanup. As a reminder, closures are still in place on the Yellowstone River 1 mile upstream and 2.5 miles downstream of the incident site. Holmgren Fishing Access Site is closed to all public use.

“For those participating in the Yellowstone Boat Float this weekend, remember the last takeout for users before the river closure is Indian Fort Fishing Access Site in Reed Point,” said Mike Ruggles, Region 5 Supervisor with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

For updated river closure information, visit: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/current-closures-restrictions/waterbody-closures>

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) has demobilized from the site but will remain the contact for reporting impacted wildlife. The Montana Raptor Conservation Center, based in Bozeman, will respond to reports of impacted wildlife. Environmental crews continue to look for

impacted wildlife.

While there is no set date currently estimated for the completion of bridge construction, teams are hopeful that the work needed can be accomplished in weeks rather than months. Crews are working around the clock with the goal of returning to normal operations as soon as possible while keeping the safety of Montana Rail Link employees, responders, and community members as the top priority.

Thursday night a public meeting was held at the Columbus High School Gym to provide the community an update about the progress at the site. Unified Command plans to issue a press release Sunday afternoon.

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.