

Update as of 1600, July 2, 2023

Stillwater Train Derailment Press Release

Reed Point, Montana (July 02, 2023) – 4:00pm

The last rail car in the river, containing sulphur, and bridge steel are in the process of being removed from the river. Three rail cars containing asphalt remain on the eastern side of the bridge. Work to transfer product from the first car to stable rail cars began this afternoon.

Today notifications to agricultural irrigation ditch users began stating that they can open their irrigation canals which were closed as a safety precaution. Shoreline teams will monitor the irrigation ditches.

“We reached a milestone today with the opening of agricultural ditches. This is imperative for the nearby ranches that rely on the Yellowstone River for their operations,” said Stillwater County Department of Emergency Services Chief David Stamey.

This morning Unified Command received a report of an oiled bird. The Oiled Wildlife Care Network investigated the location and found the bird. Oiled Wildlife Care teams continue assessment of the riverbanks for oiled wildlife. 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) and provide the animal’s location, time last seen, and your contact information.

“Our team remains concerned and diligent to find any impacts to wildlife. We have been actively assessing the river and began removing the asphalt materials to help mitigate impacts to wildlife,” said the Incident Commander for Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Chad Anderson. “Please call the hotline to report any observed impacts, we have crews available to investigate and veterinarians available to help impacted wildlife.”

Earlier this week, teams assessed the shoreline for impacts and determined the best process for removal of asphalt materials. Today shoreline cleanup teams went out on the water to begin removing the asphalt material along the shoreline. Cleanup is focused on minimizing impacts to sensitive ecosystems and wildlife. Teams will target areas anticipated to have the most product based on analysis of river flow. Unified Command is setting up disposal drop points and a process for the public who would like to remove the material on their property and dispose of it. More information and a map of drop locations will follow.

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. To report observed asphalt material, submit information to: rpderailment@mtrail.com.

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Crews working to remove asphalt material

For more information, please visit the response websites at: <https://response.epa.gov/stillwatertrainderailment> and <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.