

Stillwater Train Derailment Press Release

Reed Point, Montana (July 26, 2023) – 1:00pm

Cleanup teams are prioritizing collecting large pieces of actionable asphalt material. Receding water levels may expose previously undetectable asphalt material, especially closer to the site. Post-cleanup assessment teams will determine if some areas will need additional cleanup efforts. Five smaller boats were brought in to support the operation as river levels continue to drop. As of Tuesday night, teams have collected approximately 164,634 pounds of asphalt material. Cleanup crews have not yet stopped work due to triple digit temperatures but are focused on keeping teams safe.

Unified Command is going out with assessment teams this week to determine how much material remains downstream and gain a better estimate of how long cleanup efforts will continue before demobilization. As teams continue to put in the same amount of effort but start to see diminishing returns on the amount of asphalt material they are able to gather, Unified Command will determine how long the cleanup efforts will continue.

Unified Command reopened Holmgren Fishing Access Site to the public on July 21. The site is open for full public use, but some cleanup resources will continue to be staged at Holmgren for the duration of the response. The Yellowstone River remains closed 1 mile upstream to 2.5 miles downstream of the bridge. Unified Command and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks are working to open this section of river as soon as it is safe for the public. All other sites that were closed in response to the incident have been reopened.

Bridge construction was completed on Saturday, July 22nd, allowing train service to resume late that morning. Significant progress was made over the last week of construction efforts, with work being completed ahead of initial estimates, allowing service to officially be restored 28 days post outage. As normal train traffic resumes, crews and contractors will remain on site to remove all equipment and material utilized throughout the process and continue to restore the area. The safety of these crews, Montana Rail Link employees, and members of the public remain top priority as train service is restored. Montana Rail Link remains committed to addressing any impacts to the area as a result of this incident.

Cleanup and assessment crews continue to look for impacted wildlife daily. Nine snakes and seven birds died after encountering the asphalt material; one snake encountered the material and was released back into the environment for 17 total confirmed animals impacted by the material.

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EPA's river operations dashboard on the incident website has up-to-date information on the amount of collected asphalt material and assessment locations and is available online: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/719ee8d6c1d743e89b95ee946d1d4d45/page/River-Operations/>

Members of the public are encouraged to continue avoiding touching the asphalt material with bare skin and reporting it to the email below. 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 at:

<https://response.epa.gov/stillwatertrainderailment>

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

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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.





Cleanup crew.



Large asphalt material deposit.



Bridge construction.