



Liaison Update #1

UPDATE: 5/27/2022

OES Report # 22-2410: Updated 5/23/22

INCIDENT INFORMATION

Date of Incident: Thursday, April 28, 2022

Name of Incident: Smith River Incident

Location: Gasquet, Del Norte County

Product details: Asphalt Binder

INCIDENT UPDATE

On April 28th, a tanker truck carrying asphalt binder overturned and spilled an estimated 3000 gallons along the roadway of Highway 199 near Gasquet, some of which flowed into the adjacent Smith River. Asphalt binder is a heavy semi-solid petroleum product used as a glue to hold a road together.

The California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service and other agencies initially responded to conduct cleanup at the time of the incident. Earthen dams were constructed to impede flow of the material to the river and limited impacts to the river were observed at the time. The spilled product solidified in water and on the bank due to cold temperature.

Weather, terrain, and the challenging nature of the product and environment (stuck hard to the rocky and gunnite bank) has hampered cleanup over the last several weeks and some operations were temporarily suspended due to safety concerns. Shoreline monitoring continued, as weather permitted. Additionally, it has taken time for responding agencies and contractors to develop potentially effective strategies to remove the product from the environment.

US Ecology was the initial cleanup contractor, but was replaced by Ancon, which was better equipped for this response.

On May 23, 2022, OES Report was updated indicating that asphalt binder was detected up to six miles downstream from the original incident location. One section of affected river is along Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park. OSPR has been working with both State and National

Parks, as well as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Department of the Interior (DOI), and other agencies to further assess and conduct cleanup in the parks and National Forest as well as the community of Hiouchi. Ancon is cleaning tarballs and tar patties in these areas this week and will complete first round of cleaning today, May 27, 2022. There will be a safety stand-down for operations over the Memorial Day weekend, given the need to keep Highway 199 open.

Additionally, Ancon continues to work on cleaning the product from the bank and are working as many hours as possible given the constraints on road closure timing and safety. Cleanup crews began at the waterline and are working upslope from there to minimize likelihood of any further migration of the material to the water. Work conducted this week by Ancon Services focused on removing the tar-like material from the riverbank in the immediate spill area off of Highway 199 near Gasquet, downstream cleanup efforts of tarballs within Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, part of the Redwood National and State Parks, and all reported tarballs within the park have been removed. As of Thursday, May 26, no product was actively entering the river. Much of what has been observed downstream is small pieces of product. No petroleum sheen has been observed on water.

Work near the incident site will pause for the holiday weekend to reduce traffic congestion, since a single lane closure has been required for worker safety. In the meantime, recovery of product will be focused in other parts of the river where product has been observed.

Agencies are in the process of formalizing a Unified Command and have met with Ms. Erika Partee, the Natural Resource Director for the Tolowa Dee-Ni' Nation to ensure their concerns are understood. The Liaison Officer and State Parks will continue to coordinate with tribes in the area.

OSPR and other Trustee Agencies will be engaged for the long term to manage and complete the response, long term monitoring and any other remediation that may be required. It is anticipated that tarballs and mats will continue to become visible as water levels fall, so the response may need to return to areas that we have previously cleaned. Unfortunately, not all of the product is accessible from the shoreline and there are significant environmental tradeoffs associated with more aggressive cleanup strategies in areas of high-quality native habitat and/or along the bottom of the river itself that the Unified Command will need to consider in approving cleanup endpoints that maximize the benefit and minimize the damage associated with continued cleanup operations.

SAFETY

All response personnel continue to abide by COVID-19 protocols, as outlined by Del Norte County and the CDC. Work along the roadway, work down in the canyon and water flow rates in the Smith River continue to pose potential safety hazards for response workers, which can limit operations. There will be an Operation Safety pause over the Memorial Day weekend.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Shoreline oiling and the success of the cleanup operations is being assessed through the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT; <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/oil-and-chemical-spills/oil-spills/resources/shoreline-cleanup-and-assessment-technique->

[scat.html](#)). Response teams are assessing the impacts on foot and by boat to locate tarballs/tar patties and recommend cleanup strategies. Following cleanup operations, the SCAT teams return to each area to verify attainment of the cleanup objectives. The attached map shows the spill area from the point of the accident to the downstream-most observation of oil with representative photos collected by the SCAT teams of the observed oiling.

WILDLIFE IMPACTS

Four dead snakes of unknown species were recovered in the product during cleanup. OSPR is coordinating with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network to deploy trained wildlife responders if needed. Anyone observing oiled wildlife should not attempt to capture it. Instead, please report observations of oiled wildlife to the oiled wildlife hotline at 1-877-UCD-OWCN (1-800-823-6926).

NRDA

A Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) is a process that determines the amount of restoration necessary to restore the resources and compensate for injuries and losses to wildlife, habitat, and human use losses caused by spills. In this incident the Trustee Agencies include the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife –Office of Spill Prevention and Response (CDFW-OSPR), and California Department of Parks and Recreation. The trustees work cooperatively with the Responsible Party to identify the extent of natural resource injuries and determine if a damage assessment is applicable.

TAR BALLS

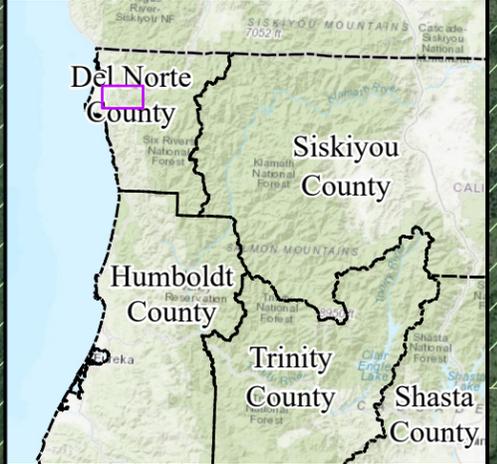
The Unified Command has approved fliers to be distributed and posted along the response area. The flier is at the bottom of this Liaison Update. There have been no significant environmental impacts due to the product's hardened chemical characteristics, but it still contains petroleum and should be cleaned up only by trained professionals. If you observe tarballs, please do not pick them up and report the sighting to tarballreports@wildlife.ca.gov. If you can, please provide as much information as possible in the email:

- 1) Date the oil was observed
- 2) Time the oil was observed
- 3) Specific location of the observed oil (preferably GPS coordinates)
- 4) A few descriptive photographs of the oil
- 5) Estimated quantity
- 6) Contact information for follow-up

A tarball fact sheet in both English and Spanish can be found at the following location:
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=29232&inline>

MEDIA

Media inquiries can be directed to CDFW-OSPR Public Information Officer Eric Laughlin at 562-568-5590. More information will be shared when it becomes available.

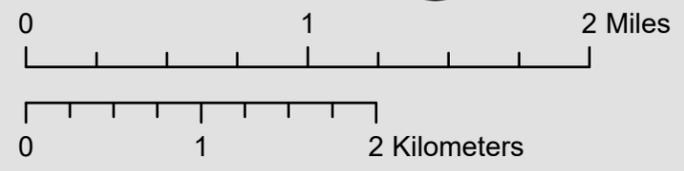


California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Office of Spill Prevention and Response

Data Source: CDFW OSPR, CA State Parks
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NOTICE OF TARBALLS IN RIVER

A Coalition of federal, state and local agencies is leading cleanup efforts following a truck incident on Highway 199 near Gasquet that discharged an asphalt-binding material into the Smith River.

Cleanup contractors have been actively removing product from the incident site and are also targeting downstream areas for cleanup.

There have been no significant environmental impacts due to the product's hardened chemical characteristics, but it still contains petroleum and should be cleaned up only by trained professionals. If you observe tarballs, please do not pick them up and report the sighting to:

tarballreports@wildlife.ca.gov