



Liaison Update #2

UPDATE: 6/3/2022

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 BACKGROUND

On April 28th, a tanker truck carrying asphalt binder overturned and spilled an estimated 3,000 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 Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service and other agencies initially responded to facilitate 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, the OES Report was updated indicating that fragments of 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 completed cleaning tarballs and tar patties in these areas and completed first round of cleaning May 27, 2022. There was a safety stand-down for operations over the Memorial Day weekend, given the need to keep Highway 199 open.

The Liaison Officer and State Parks 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.

OPERATIONAL AND SHORELINE CLEAN UPDATE

Ancon continues to work on cleaning the product from the bank rock and riverbed 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 in recent weeks 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.

OSPR Environmental Scientists continue to perform surveys this week as summarized below:

- Post-cleanup surveys at the down-river sites that were inspected and cleaned the prior week 5/23-28. One tar patty (approximately 30 cm diameter) was recovered from the Peacock Bar day-use area.
- Re-surveyed Point St. George that was reported in an OES notification on 5/27/22 (22-3053). Site surveyed again on 6/1/22. No visible oil observed.
- Shoreline cleanup assessment survey at Ruby van Deventer County Park on 6/2/2022. No visible oil observed.
- Accompanied Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation to deploy an underwater ROV at spill site on 6/2/2022. No visible oil observed underwater.
- Plans to survey sites down-river of Ruby van Deventer County Park to coastal Smith River Estuary

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation will survey by boat the river gravel bars downriver of the spill location to identify and mark observable oiling at inaccessible sites.

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.

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 map attached to the bottom of this update 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. The graphic below outlines the general oil fate and strategies for this incident.

Smith River Incident – Oil Fate and Strategies

INCIDENT INFORMATION
A truck carrying asphalt binder crashed, spilling the contents onto the highway. The product then flowed to the riverbank and into the Smith River. Different strategies are being implemented to address the spill site and product that is appearing on shorelines downstream.

SPILL SITE
The product quickly solidified in the cold weather along the shoreline. Earthen dams were constructed to impede flow of the material to the river and responders began to remove product from the shoreline. Warm weather increased the stickiness of the product on the shoreline, but no sheen has been observed at this time. Strategies to remove the remaining product from the shoreline will prioritize responder safety and attempt to minimize potential erosion impacts.

DOWNSTREAM
In the cold water, the product solidified and sunk. In solid form, the product remained hidden from view in the deeper portions of the river. A storm increased flow and turbulence within the water which remobilized the solid product and broke it into smaller pieces. The current then carried these small pieces (tarballs) down river.

As the tarballs moved downstream, turbulence within the river broke up the product into smaller tar balls, which were deposited onto shorelines. After the storm, flows reduced, and air temperatures increased. Tar balls deposited on the shorelines were heated by the warm weather and turned sticky. Responders are conducting Shoreline Cleanup Assessments to determine shoreline oiling and appropriate cleanup methods. The Unified Command is also evaluating safe and effective strategies for assessing the extent of the sunken oil and methods for potentially removing it from the river bottom.

Report tarballs to tarballreports@wildlife.ca.gov

EPA, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATION, CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE & FISHERIES COMMISSION

A video posted to OSPR social media illustrates the cleanup at site and environmental assessments being conducted downstream. You can watch the video here:

<http://Facebook.com/CalSpillwatch>

WILDLIFE IMPACTS

Four dead snakes of yet to be confirmed species were recovered in the product during cleanup. OSPR has coordinated with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network to deploy trained wildlife responders as 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

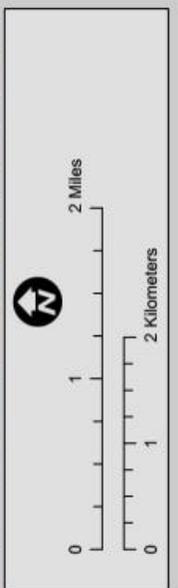
On May 26, 2022, the Unified Command approved fliers for distribution and posting along the response area. The flier is at the bottom of this Liaison Update. There have been no significant environmental impacts due to the product's hardened chemical characteristics, but it still contains petroleum and 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 916 214-3279. More information will be shared when it becomes available.



**Smith River Incident
Del Norte County
Release Date: 04/28/22**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Office of Spill Prevention and Response
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Data Date: 04/28/22
Author: L. Coyle, G. Anderson
Date Created: 05/02/22



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