

Editor's Note: Our thanks to Ted Curphy and Trainorders BBS for some great coverage!

This morning, Ted Curphey posted on the Trainorders BBS some interesting images of a derailment which occurred Friday, July 4, 2014 on Montana Rail Link (ex-Northern Pacific Railway).

I took off this morning in search of the derailment with the Boeing cars with limited info. In fact I totally missed the derailment going east. It wasn't until I photographed a heavy unit coke train going up Evaro Hill that I heard the west end dispatcher give out a milepost for the derailment that helped me zero in on it. The derailment is at MP 165 on the 4th Sub between Cyr and the Fish Creek Trestle (just under a mile east of the trestle). Even then you really can't see very much from Fish Creek Road due to all the trees above the tracks. It wasn't until I got to the far side of the river via a hike over rugged terrain and through a pine forest that I finally saw just how bad this derailment was. All told, six aircraft bodies were involved with three in the river. 5 of the 737 bodies suffered heavy damage while the lead most plane lost the rear truck on it's flatcar carrier.

This derailment is going to take a day or two yet to reopen the tracks, and even then, likely will require MRL's big hook to retrieve the three planes and flatcars that went over the bank.

Personally, I suspect that a sun kink will likely be the cause of the derailment. The ambient temp spiked at 93° F (34° C) at the time of the derailment in this area, the hottest it has been since winter ended. The derailment happened at the worst spot possible (outside of being on a trestle). The spot is a reverse curve on a narrow ledge some 200 feet (61 meters) above the river in the rugged canyon. The tail section of the plane with the large crack in it was threatening to tear off and float away. I was kinda waiting for it to happen, but it didn't. It may happen overnight.

That brush rack sure took a beating. Not really seen in the photos are the first and second planes. The first plane was dragged clear of the scene losing the trailing truck on it's flatcar carrier. The second plane ended up sitting askew on the right-of-way with the tail end hanging out over the canyon. The tail of the third plane did get ripped off. The remaining planes went into the river.

This is a very rugged canyon that is popular with rafters, who were very excited to discover the wreck during their journey downriver. Many were trying to stop for pics, but the Fish and Wildlife Department was shooin

them away down the river to avoid the dangers of the scene. There was talk of the river being shut down on this popular weekend, which would tick off a lot of people and rafting companies. **Also note they were a few cars away from putting some large LPG or ammonia tank cars over the edge.**

Ted Curphey
Cheney, Washington USA



Derailed at MP 185 on MRL's 4th Sub near Fish Creek, MT

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