Beavers Released into Wild After Utah Fuel Spill

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Five beavers that were rescued from a March diesel fuel spill in Utah were released back into the wild on Tuesday after being treated for respiratory and other problems.

One of five Willard Bay beavers brought back to health emerges from plastic tunnel from it new starter lodge at its new home in the Uinta Mountains Tuesday, Aug. 13 in Box Elder County, Utah. The beavers were burned by petroleum and suffered respiratory and gastrointestinal problems after a March diesel fuel spill in Willard Bay. **(AP Photo/The Salt Lake Tribune, Al Hartmann)**

"I'm sad to see them go, but it is for the best," 18-year-old volunteer Brayden Child of Roy told the Salt Lake Tribune [1]. "I'll miss them."

Wildlife officials recovered the animals after a Chevron pipeline leaked about 20,000 gallons of diesel fuel. A beaver dam is credited with holding back much of the fuel from drifting into Willard Bay in Box Elder County.

"They were in pretty rough shape when we took them into the center, but they are very good at rehabilitating wildlife and we expected that they would survive," said Phil Douglass, a conservation outreach officer with the Division of Wildlife Resources.

The animals were released in the Uinta Mountains by staff members with the state Division of Wildlife Resources and Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

The beavers had been burned by petroleum and suffered respiratory and gastrointestinal problems. A sixth beaver underwent surgery to remove a toe that

was injured while in captivity. That animal is still recovering and is expected to be released in two weeks.

The rehabilitated animals were carried up to the release site in special boxes that resemble beaver lodges. Wildlife officials hope the boxes will serve as temporary protection for the beavers until they can build lodges of their own.

Boxes holding four of the beavers were opened in front of a pipe that the animals traveled down to enter the pond underwater. Soon after, they were seen swimming freely in the pond.

The fifth beaver was released above the pond.

The animals will need to build lodges and store food before winter, something they should have enough time to do, said DaLyn Erickson, director of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah.

Erickson said the past few months with the beavers had been emotional for her staff and volunteers.

"It was hard not knowing what we would see or what new problems may have come up," she said. "We celebrated the tiniest bit of progress."

Staff members were so busy with the Willard Bay beavers that the rehab organization's annual fundraiser was called off.

Chevron contributed $35,000 to the center to defray the costs of nursing the animals back to health, and to make up for the loss of proceeds from the cancelled fundraiser.

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