

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4

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January 26, 2024,

Craig Cockrell
Biologist, Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
PR.ITP.applications@noaa.gov

Dear Mr. Cockrell:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requests a one-year renewal of the Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) for the Caltrans 04-3G474 San Rafael-Richmond Bridge Project (Project). The IHA is due to expire on March 31, 2024, before Project activities will be complete. All remaining activities for the Project are identical to those described in the IHA application. Nothing about the planned activity is different from what was analyzed in the initial IHA. The location, equipment, manner of conducting activities, seasonal restrictions, and mitigation and monitoring measures will remain the same.

Remaining activities include the following:

- Sandblasting, cleaning, and painting of the upper and lower decks. Will not exceed one more construction season. Will only occur while containment remains in place.
- Finishing up road deck repair and expansion joints of the lower deck. Will not exceed one more construction season. Will only occur while containment remains in place.
- Removal of the full containment system that encapsulates the lower deck of the bridge. Expected to take 10 days to remove and will not occur within the March 1 to August 1 seasonal restriction between piers 52 – 57.

During the 2023 construction season, Caltrans monitored the seal colony at Castro Rocks for signs of take during the installation of the debris containment system. They monitored the seals while the containment system was installed within the designated harassment zone, between piers 52 and 57. Caltrans completed 19 days of monitoring between 10/6/2023 and 11/7/2023, and observed a total of 402 harbor seals, with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 84 individuals on a given day. The number of seals observed coincided with how high the tide was during the survey. No take associated with the installation of the containment system was observed. The initial IHA authorized the take of 9,000 incidents of Level B Harassment. Caltrans does not anticipate take incidents to exceed the limit authorized by the IHA.

Thank you for consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at (510) 715-6247. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Caitlin De La Torre

CAITLIN DE LA TORRE
Branch Chief Office Chief
Office of Biological Science and Permits

cc: Benjamin Laws, Deputy Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, NOAA Fisheries
Sion M. Kidane, Project Manager, Project Management West, Caltrans
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