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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 27, 2020

To: Angela Caffrey, Senior Construction Project Manager
West Linn Wilsonville School District
WLWV 2019 Capital Bond Program

From: Christie Galen, Senior Ecologist

Re: Bald Eagle and Raptor Assessment
West Linn School District Proposed School Site:
Willamette Falls Drive / Dollar Street
PHS # 6960

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Pacific Habitat Services, Inc. (PHS) was contracted by the West Linn School District to conduct a bald eagle assessment of a proposed school project site located east of Fields Bridge Park between Willamette Falls Drive and Dollar Street in West Linn, Clackamas County, Oregon. The purpose of this assessment was to address neighborhood concerns that a bald eagle was observed in the vicinity and might be nesting on the site. While on the property, PHS ornithologists also reviewed whether other raptors were nesting.

BALD EAGLE

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are common resident species in Oregon. They are associated with rivers and other large bodies of water where they fish and nest in close proximity. Two general bald eagle habitats are of primary concern: nesting and wintering.

Nesting

Bald eagles nest in large trees, such as Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*), near open water. They build huge nests near the tops of sturdy mature trees.

Large trees are necessary to support their large, bulky nests, and also to provide unobstructed perches for seeking prey. Bald eagles have high nest site fidelity and return to a particular breeding

territory year after year. In Oregon, courtship begins in January; egg laying mid-February to late April; hatching late March to late May; and fledging late June to mid-August (Marshall et al 2003). Nests are reused multiple times.

Wintering

In winter, they often congregate at specific wintering sites that are generally close to open water and offer good perch trees and night roosts (Marshall et al 2003). Wintering areas offer an abundance of prey and carrion that are typically associated with large concentrations of waterfowl and/or large mammals.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act protects bald eagles and their nests; activities that could potentially harm them or their nests or identified winter roost sites require special permits issued through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Two PHS ornithologists conducted a site visit during the bald eagle breeding season, on June 10 and 11, 2020. Every appropriate tree on the project site was scanned with binoculars to see if bald eagle, eagle sign, or bald eagle nests were present. The site was also viewed from the Fields Bridge Park to scan for nests and eagle activity. In addition to bald eagle nests, a survey was also conducted for other raptor nests.

RESULTS

The subject site is located near the confluence of the Tualatin and Willamette Rivers. Vegetation consists of a mixed coniferous/deciduous forest consisting of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*). The understory has patches of native sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) but is dominated by non-native species.

Trees that are large enough to provide potential nesting habitat for bald eagle are present on the periphery of the site, but their tops are intact with too many branches to provide sufficient eagle access. Their size and structure provide perching opportunities for bald eagles but are not suitable for bald eagle nesting. All of the trees were surveyed for nests and no nests were observed.

One adult bald eagle flew high over the vicinity of the site heading west. An osprey was observed hunting near the bridge adjacent to Fields Bridge Park, but no bald eagle flew by to harass it. If bald eagles were nesting in the grove, they would have chased the osprey away from the site.

The property was also reviewed for other raptors, including red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, Osprey, barred owls, and great horned owls. No nests and no active use of the property was observed by these raptors.

SUMMARY

Bald eagles are not nesting on the project site; no nests or eagle sign was detected. Bald eagles might periodically perch in trees by the river or on site. Removing trees on the project site will not affect bald eagle nests. In addition, no other raptors (i.e. red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, Osprey, barred owls, and great horned owls) were found to be nesting within the property.

Angela Caffrey, Project Manager
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REFERENCES

Marshall, D.B., M.G. Hunter, and A.L. Contreras, Eds. 2003. *Birds of Oregon: A General Reference*. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, OR. 768 pp.