

ABFJV Helps Prevent Serious Environmental Hazard

The Left Coast Lifter, the massive shear-leg crane designed to construct the new self-anchored suspension (SAS) span of the new San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB), recently aided the U.S. Coast Guard's recovery of the USS Wenonah, a decommissioned U.S. Navy tugboat that sank on nearby Treasure Island on August 18, 2009.

ABFJV, which owns the Left Coast Lifter, provided the crane barge, the largest of its kind on the west coast, to retrieve the tugboat from 30 feet of water. In a true team effort with the Coast Guard and the salvage company, ABFJV crews were able to help the Bay Area community and the environment by preventing additional oil from spilling from the sunken tugboat.

The team first used a ringer crane to attach 5-inch-thick chains to the bow and stern of the 1940s-era tugboat to secure the rigging system that would support and contain the boat as it was lifted from the San Francisco Bay. The tugboat weight, including the bay water that had flooded it, exceeded 450 metric tons, a relatively lightweight task for a crane with a lift capacity of 1,700 metric tons.

The crane held the tugboat in midair while the Coast Guard and the National Response Center pumped out the bay water, fuel, and lube oil. Emergency repairs were also performed so that the tugboat could float on its own and prevent any further contamination of the bay. The Left Coast Lifter then lowered the USS Wenonah back into the water, from where it will be taken away for dismantling.

The Coast Guard knew that ABFJV had the unique piece of equipment that could be used to help them address this serious situation. Fluor and American Bridge have an excellent relationship with the Coast Guard, and, as members of the Bay Area, were pleased to demonstrate their commitment to the community by responding to this emergency. Caltrans spokesperson Bart Ney told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "The Left Coast Lifter's main job is to construct the self-anchored suspension span. But history will show that one of its first jobs was to help its neighbors."

The rescue drew a crowd of people who gathered on the southeastern shore of the island to watch the work on the hot August day. Area media were also well represented and covered the event.

Designed to lift the steel deck and tower sections of the new SFOBB SAS bridge into place, the Left Coast Lifter is once again back on task. Work continues on the new 1,800-foot-long bridge, which will be the world's largest of its kind. The bridge will feature a single 525-foot-tall steel tower and two parallel steel bridge decks, and use 42,000 tons of steel in its tower and superstructure.

