

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 8, 2010

TO: Ivy Edmonds-Hess
Parsons Brinckerhoff

FROM: Steve Granholm, Bird Monitoring Task Leader
LSA Associates, Inc.

FOR: California Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Bird Monitoring Memo #393, Week of January 11 – 15, 2010
San Francisco – Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Project

PURSUANT TO: US Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion and California Department of Fish and Game Incidental Take Permit

Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Department) is in the process of replacing the East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB) with a new bridge immediately to the north of the existing span (Figure 1). Construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project (SFOBB Project) is a multi-year effort that will involve a number of construction activities on land as well as in San Francisco Bay. Some of these activities could potentially affect federally and State endangered or threatened bird species and other bird species of special concern.

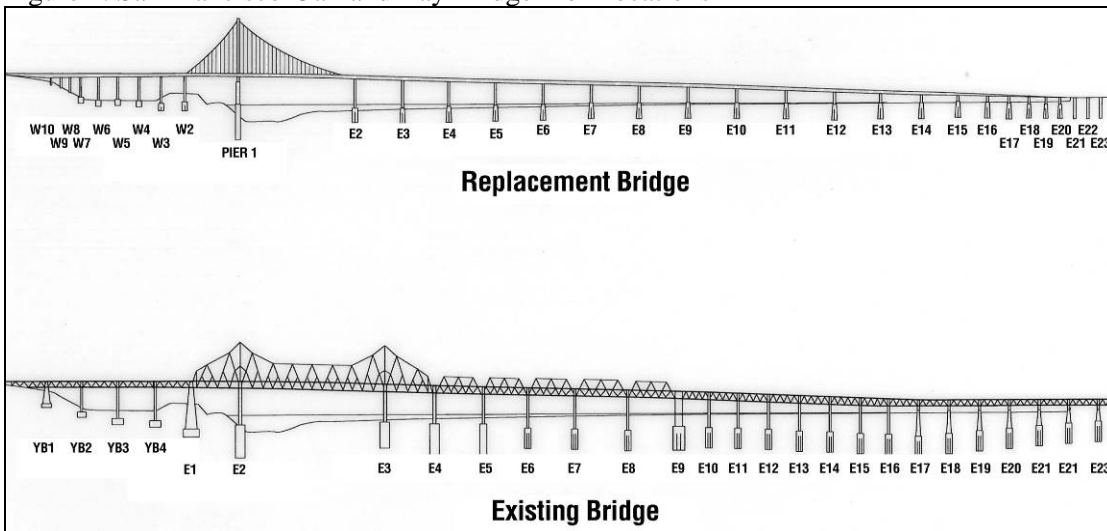
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also concerned about potential impacts to the American peregrine falcon and the double-crested cormorant and required a management plan for these species (Fully Protected Species Item 3 on page 5). In addition, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project Final Environmental Impact Statement/Statutory Exemption and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation (FEIS) (page 4-130) requires that the Department monitor the double-crested cormorant colony and American peregrine falcon during the breeding season.

As required by the USFWS Biological Opinion and CDFG Incidental Take Permit, the monitoring efforts are focused primarily on three endangered species: the California least tern, California brown pelican, and American peregrine falcon. The primary objectives of these monitoring efforts are to minimize impacts to these three species and document any take of these species resulting from construction activities. In addition, monitoring is conducted to assess: 1) potential impacts to the behavior of American peregrine falcons and double-crested cormorants on the existing SFOBB East Span; 2) seasonal Canada goose activities along an exclusion fence built between a portion of the Emeryville Crescent and I-80; and 3) potential impacts on breeding activities of western gulls, which are known to nest on both the existing and new bridges (Figure 2). Monitoring is conducted in accordance with the *Final (Revised) Bird Monitoring and Management Plan* (Department, 2003). This plan incorporated the requirements of the USFWS, the CDFG, and the FEIS, as well as those of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) Permit No. 8-01, Special Condition F-6.

Figure 2. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Pier Locations



The bird monitors are required to conduct a survey once a week for three hours, if construction activities are underway. This memo summarizes the SFOBB Project bird monitoring activities conducted by LSA Associates (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of January 11 – 15, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from the temporary trusses north of the existing bridge. Construction activities during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension, South-South Detour, and Oakland Touchdown sites and crew boat traffic on the San Francisco Bay. There was no construction activity during the peregrine monitoring.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1354 to 1654 hours on January 15, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1600 to 1700 hours on January 15, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 1421 hours, one was observed foraging in Clipper Cove; it then flew to the south over the T1 area.

Peregrine Falcon: At 1604 hours, the resident pair of peregrine falcons was observed in the trapezoid-shaped nook (the same nook used as a nest site by the pair during last year's nesting season) on the north side of existing Pier E2. One bird then flew out of the nook and landed on the temporary trusses north of the existing bridge.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 5,100 double-crested cormorants were observed. Approximately 5,000 were perched under the existing bridge and the others were foraging in San Francisco Bay. This represents the highest count for this species in the study area since the initial SFOBB Project field survey on July 3, 2002. At 1545 hours, approximately 50-100 double-crested cormorants flushed from perch-sites near the east end of the existing bridge, apparently due to a loud noise caused by construction activity at the west end of the Oakland Touchdown. The noise was created by a large piece of equipment loading material (possibly gravel or rocks) into a truck. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 100 western gulls were observed in the study area. About 75 of them were foraging and 25 were resting under the existing bridge.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (2), greater scaup (225), surf scoter (100), bufflehead (125), common goldeneye (2), ruddy duck (1), common loon (3), horned grebe (6), western or Clark's grebe (80), Brandt's cormorant (245), and American coot (1). The number of Brandt's cormorants represents the highest count for this species in the study area since the initial field survey on July 3, 2002. In addition, six black-crowned night-herons were seen just north of the study area at their traditional roost site in the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island (just north of the study area boundary).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

At 1605 hours, a male peregrine was observed flying southeast toward the Port of Oakland. His flight appeared to have originated from the vicinity of existing Pier E4. At 1606 hours, a female peregrine was observed following the male, heading toward the Port of Oakland. Both birds flew directly toward the Port for approximately 1 minute before they were too distant to observe.

Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were Canada goose, greater scaup, surf scoter, western grebe, double-crested cormorant, western gull, and Anna's hummingbird. The number of other bird species observed during the peregrine falcon monitoring is not recorded because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for peregrine falcons.

Canada Goose Monitoring along the I-80 Roadway Adjacent to the Emeryville Crescent

Bird monitors are required to conduct Canada goose monitoring along the I-80 roadway adjacent to the Emeryville Crescent during March through August (Figure 3). The monitoring season may be extended through September or October, if warranted, based on the presence of geese that may be at risk. The monitoring objective is to assess the effectiveness of an 850-meter (2,800-foot) long fence that was designed to exclude Canada geese from entering the I-80 roadway.

Canada goose monitoring has concluded for the 2009 nesting season. Monitoring for the 2010 season will begin in March 2010.

Figure 3. Emeryville Crescent Goose Exclusion Fence



Conclusions

As noted above, approximately 50 roosting double-crested cormorants flushed from the east end of the existing bridge, apparently due to nearby construction activity. Other than this event, the monitors did not observe any indications that birds were disturbed due to SFOBB Project construction activities.

cc: Stefan Galvez, California Department of Transportation