

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 #394, Week of January 18 – 22, 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.

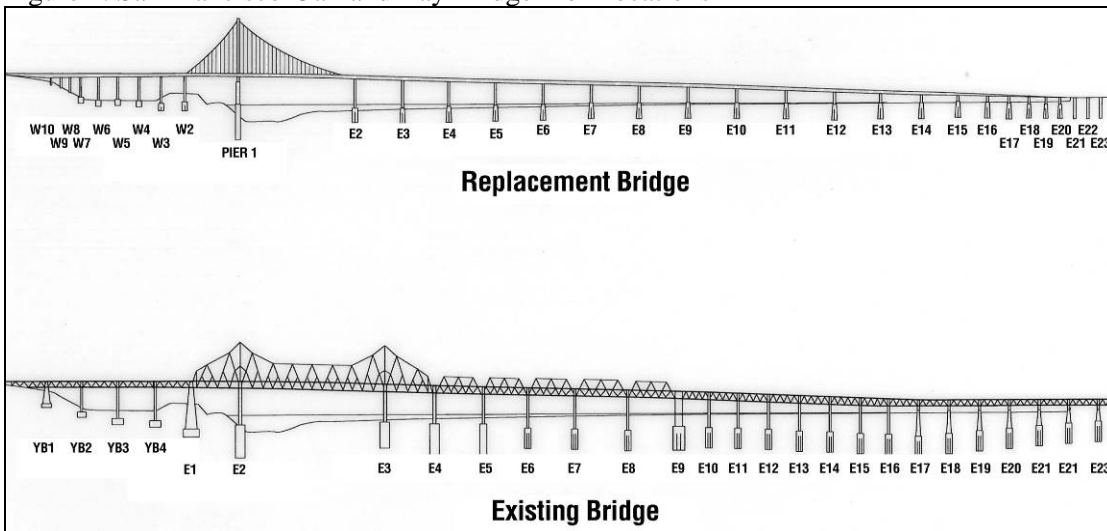
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 18 – 22, 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 W2 site on Yerba Buena Island. Construction activities during the weekly bird survey were light. A few workers were conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension area and minor work at the Oakland Touchdown. There was no construction activity during the peregrine monitoring.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0910 to 1210 hours on January 22, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1530 to 1630 hours on January 21, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 0946 hours, one brown pelican was observed flying west to east, north of new Pier E2.

Peregrine Falcon: Four peregrine falcon observations were made. At 1043 hours, an adult (likely a member of the resident pair) flew along the north edge of the Port of Oakland Outer Harbor toward the bridge. At 1127 hours, an adult flew to the railing on the northeast corner of the traveler just east of existing Pier E2. At 1129 hours, a second adult was perched on the edge of last year's nest site (a trapezoidal nook on the north side of existing Pier E2). At 1131 hours, two were copulating at the corner of the traveler, indicating that the perched individual (initially observed at 1127 hours) was the female. The male then flew off.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 470 double-crested cormorants were observed. About 450 were roosting under the existing bridge and 20 were resting or flying in other parts of the study area. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 25 western gulls were observed flying, foraging, and/or resting in the study area.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (12), greater scaup (40), surf scoter (65), bufflehead (40), red-throated loon (2), common loon (3), horned grebe (11), eared grebe (1), western grebe (27), Clark's grebe (15), western or Clark's grebe (7), Brandt's cormorant (14), pelagic cormorant (1), mew gull (25), and California gull (40).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

No peregrine falcons were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Approximately 10 brown pelicans were observed flying under the existing bridge and heading north to Clipper Cove.

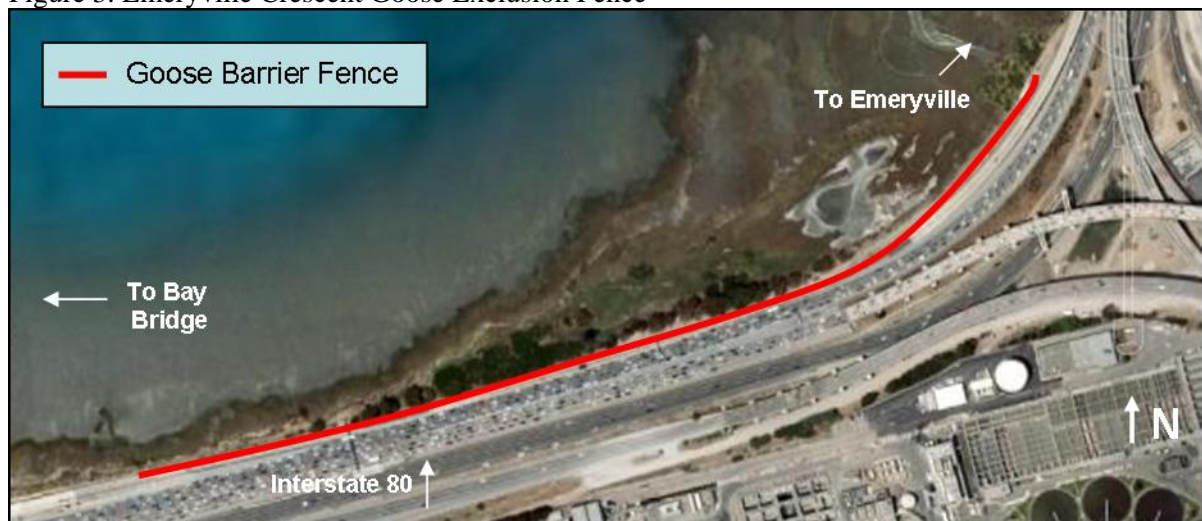
Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were surf scoter, western grebe, double-crested cormorant, western gull, and white-crowned sparrow. The number of other bird species observed during the peregrine falcon monitoring is not recorded because this activity 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

The monitors did not observe any indications that birds were disturbed due to SFOBB Project construction activities.

cc: Stefan Galvez, California Department of Transportation