

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 #395, Week of January 25 – 29, 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.

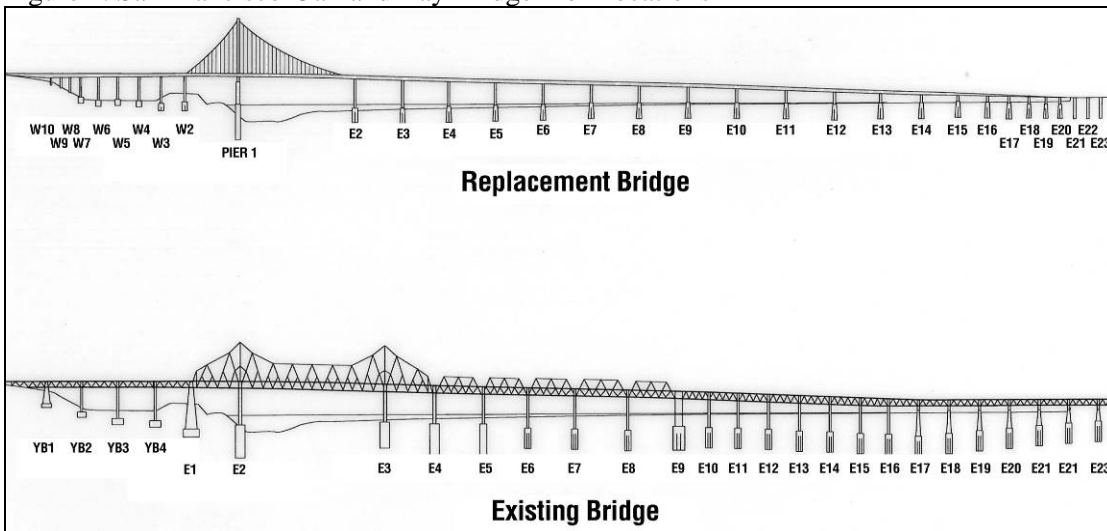
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 Marcus H. Bole & Associates (MHBA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) and during the week of January 25 – 29, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA 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 and the South-South Detour sites. There was no work in progress at the Oakland Touchdown and no crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included minor work on the east end of the temporary trusses and relocation of a large crane from W2 to a new location immediately west.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0920 to 1220 hours on January 25, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1340 to 1440 hours on January 27, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: No brown pelicans were observed.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 32 double-crested cormorants were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging in the study area. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 43 western gulls were observed resting on structures, foraging, and/or flying 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 (3), greater scaup (35), surf scoter (13), bufflehead (62), common loon (1), horned grebe (2), eared grebe (1), western grebe (10), Clark's grebe (47), Brandt's cormorant (19), great blue heron (1), mew gull (8), California gull (12), and American crow (2).

In addition, five black-crowned night-herons were perched on the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island (just north of the study area boundary).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

At 1425 hours, the adult male peregrine falcon was observed in the 2009 nest site on the north-facing leg of existing Pier E2. At 1426 hours, the adult female flew into the nest site and landed near the male. The pair proceeded to bow to each other while vocalizing a series of "e-chups," a courtship behavior. This behavior continued for approximately 4 minutes. At 1430 hours, the female flew to the hand railing along the south side of the temporary truss, approximately 15 meters (50 feet) from the observer, who was able to observe and record her bands. The female has a visual identification band on her right tarsus that reads 05/R (05 over R), confirming that she is the same female that nested at this location in 2009. She also has a silver U.S. Fish and Wildlife band on her left tarsus, but the numbers were not visible. At 1435 hours, the male flew to the eastern end of the temporary truss and perched on the hand railing. The male was

confirmed to have no bands on either tarsus. Based on facial markings (deep, wide malar stripes), the male appeared to be the same individual that nested here in 2009.

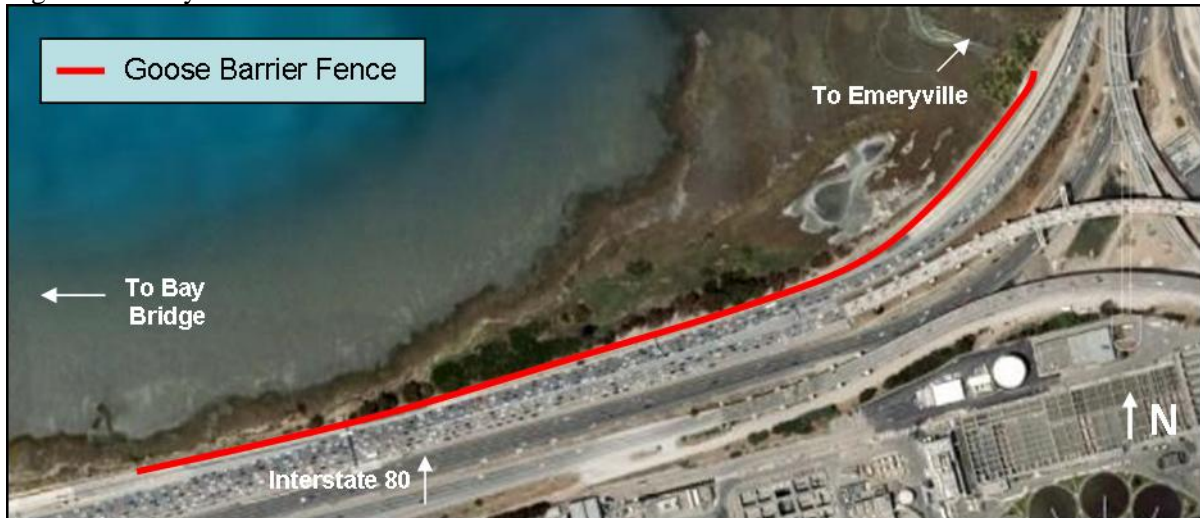
Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant and western gull. The number of other bird species observed during the peregrine falcon monitoring is not recorded because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for 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