

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 25, 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 #396, Week of February 1 – 5, 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.

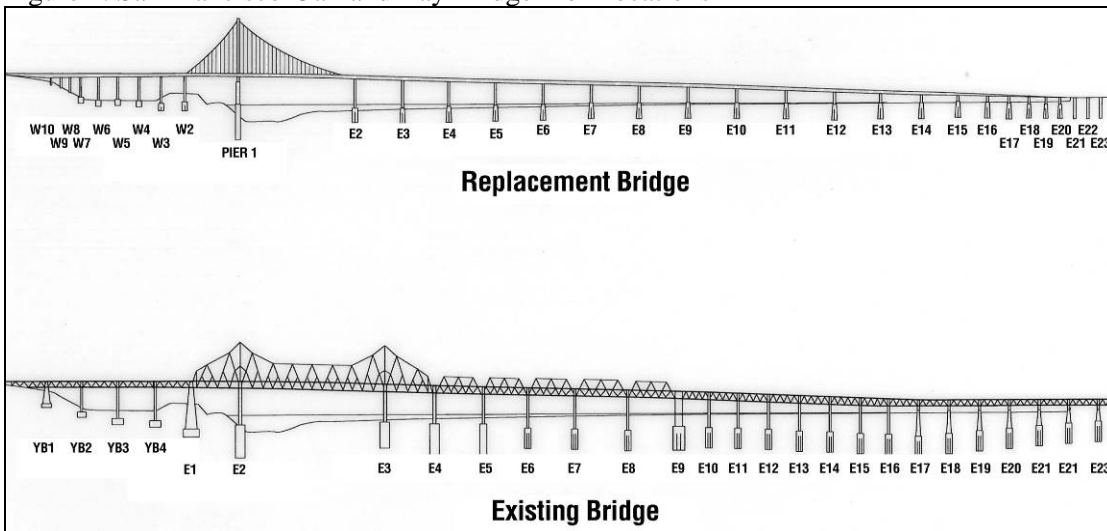
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 February 1 – 5, 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 Pier W2 site on Yerba Buena Island (YBI). Construction during the weekly bird survey included various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension (SAS) construction site and on YBI. The Left Coast Lifter Crane was stationed at T1. Construction during the peregrine monitoring included installation of a new deck section at Pier W2.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0845 to 1145 hours on February 2, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1450 to 1550 hours on February 5, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Five brown pelicans were observed: at 1010 hours. One was perched on the cable-crossing structure. At 1144 hours, four were flying approximately 150 meters (492 feet) north of the SAS construction site.

Peregrine Falcon: At 0900 hours, an adult male peregrine falcon flew east along the south side of the existing bridge. It then perched midway between the north and south edges of the bridge, on top of the crossbeam under the bridge at Pier E5. A moment later, a larger individual (female) flew in and landed on the rail of the access platform on the north side of Pier E5. At 1000 hours, the female was still perched at the same location, and the male was not seen. At 1130 hours, an adult (possibly a female, based on size) was perched on the ladder rung just above the trapezoidal nook (the 2009 nest site) on the north side of Pier E2. It then flew under the bridge to the traveler immediately to the east.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 100 double-crested cormorants were observed. Forty-seven were roosting under the existing bridge and the rest were flying, foraging or resting in other parts of the study area.

Western Gull: Approximately 30 western gulls were observed flying, foraging, 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 (10), greater scaup (40), surf scoter (62), bufflehead (42), common goldeneye (3), common loon (3), horned grebe (14), western grebe (2), Clark's grebe (14), western or Clark's grebe (50), Brandt's cormorant (5), pelagic cormorant (1), great blue heron (1), great egret (1), red-tailed hawk (1), American coot (1), spotted sandpiper (1), black turnstone (1), glaucous-winged gull (1), belted kingfisher (1), black phoebe (1), American crow (2), and song sparrow (1).

In addition, 7 black-crowned night-herons were perched in the cypress and black acacia trees on the south shore of Treasure Island, just outside the study area.

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

American peregrine falcon nests on the SFOBB East Span are monitored in addition and separately from weekly bird monitoring in active construction areas. The peregrines are monitored at least weekly from December until the end of the peregrine nesting season. At the discretion of the lead peregrine falcon monitor, the survey frequency can be increased up to 7 days a week for an active nest adjacent to active construction or demolition.

At 1450 hours, an adult male peregrine falcon was observed perched on the east end of the temporary truss. At 1532 hours, the male flew to Pier E3 of the existing bridge and perched under the lower deck. At 1540 hours, the male flew east toward Pier E4 and across the upper deck between Piers E3 and E4. The male was not observed after flying across the bridge, but was assumed to have perched on the south side of the bridge out of view.

California Brown Pelican: At approximately 1515 hours, three brown pelicans were observed soaring over Clipper Cove and later flying south toward the Port of Oakland.

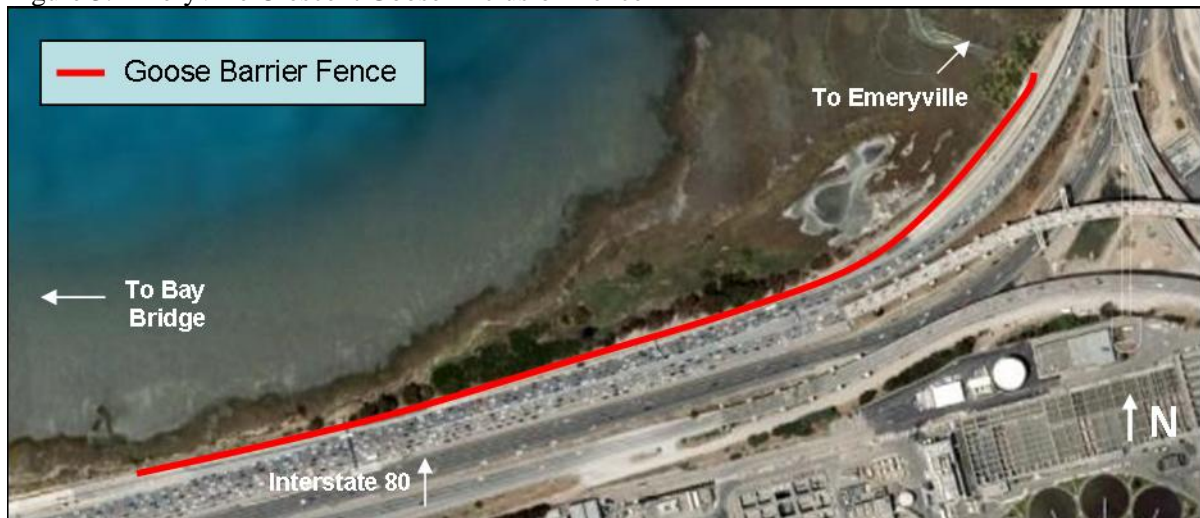
Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were surf scoter, double-crested cormorant, and western gull. The peregrine monitor does not count the number of individuals of other bird species, because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for 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