

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 #397, Week of February 8 – 12, 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.

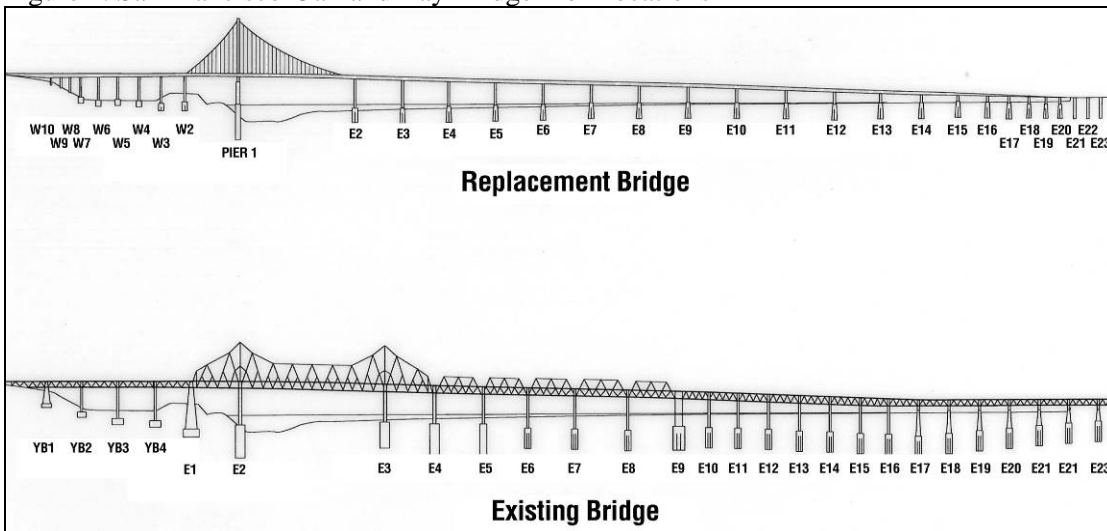
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 8 – 12, 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 a temporary truss north of the existing bridge. Construction during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension construction site, but work activity appeared to be light, as was crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included installation of the second deck section at Pier W2. Approximately 20 to 30 workers were on the temporary truss during the monitoring period.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1323 to 1623 hours on February 9, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1415 to 1515 hours on February 12, 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 380 double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area. Approximately 350 were roosting under the existing bridge and the rest were foraging, flying, or resting in other parts of the study area.

Western Gull: Approximately 40 western gulls were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging in the study area. One adult was seen picking at a dead surf scoter about 200 meters (656 feet) south of existing Pier E16.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (3), greater scaup (115), surf scoter (95), bufflehead (103), ruddy duck (2), common loon (1), horned grebe (3), eared grebe (1), western grebe (40), Clark's grebe (12), Brandt's cormorant (150), pelagic cormorant (2), mew gull (30), California gull (10), and glaucous-winged gull (1).

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 1442 hours, an adult male peregrine falcon was observed flying from the east end of the temporary truss, passing over the Left Coast Lifter Crane and heading northeast toward Berkeley. No other observations of peregrine falcons were made during the monitoring period.

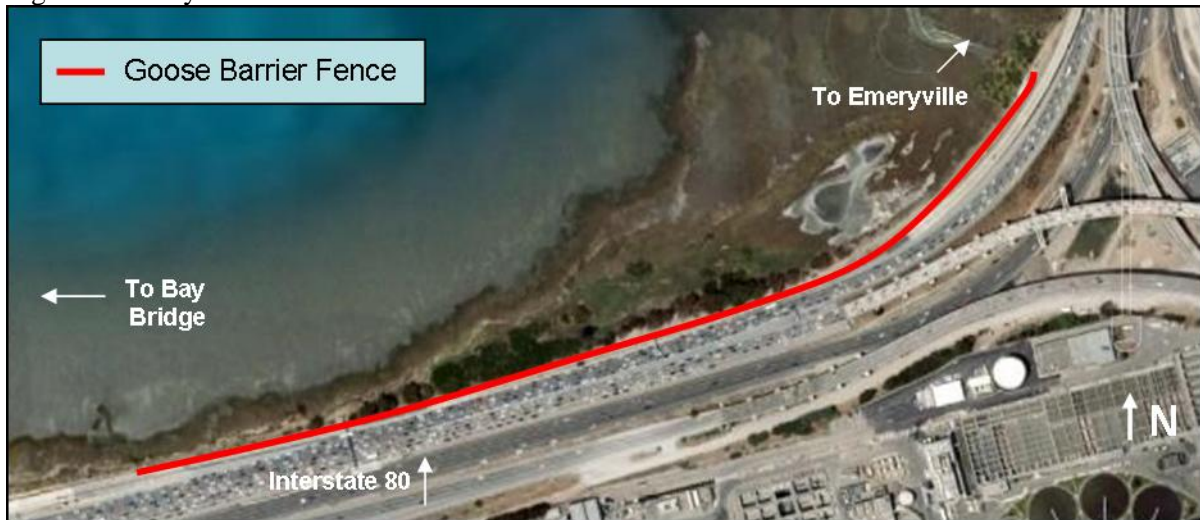
Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were surf scoter, western grebe, western gull, Anna’s hummingbird, and common raven. The peregrine monitor does not count the number of individuals of other bird species, because this activity would distract the 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