

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 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 #399, Week of February 22 – 26, 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.

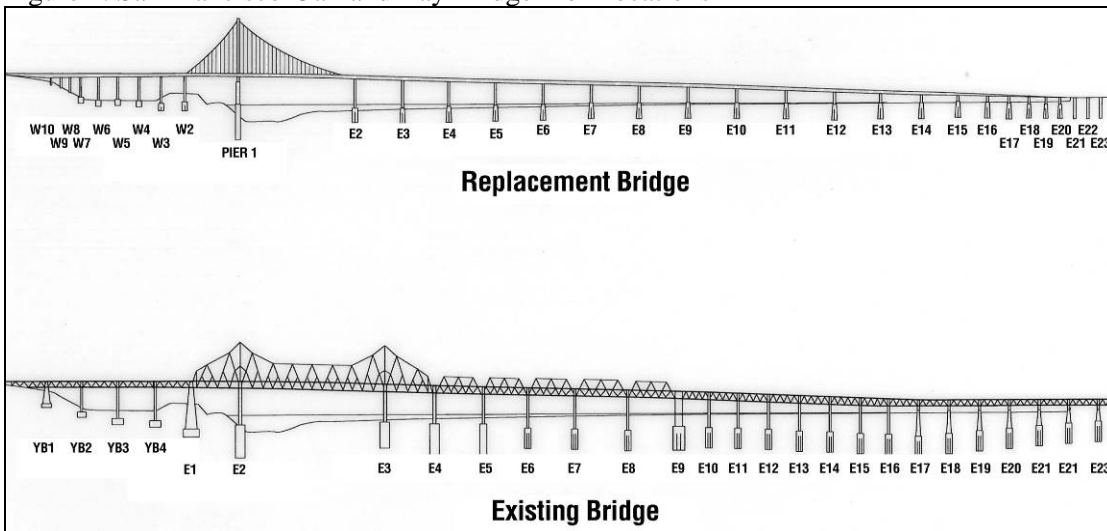
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 February 22 – 26, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. GANDA did not conduct peregrine falcon monitoring this week due to rain and stormy weather. Construction during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension construction site and crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. In addition, the Left Coast Lifter Crane was operating near Pier E2 of the new bridge.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1205 to 1505 hours on February 25, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: From 1220 to 1250 hours, one brown pelican was observed foraging in Clipper Cove.

Peregrine Falcon: At 1305 hours, one peregrine falcon was seen flying and then perching on top of the superstructure above existing Pier E5. It remained there for about five minutes and then flew off.

Double-crested Cormorant: Thirty-one double-crested cormorants were observed. Some were perched under the existing bridge and others were foraging in the San Francisco Bay.

Western Gull: Approximately 28 western gulls were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging in the study area. Some individuals were seen perched on the pier footings of the existing bridge.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were greater scaup (52), surf scoter (32), bufflehead (75), red-throated loon (2), common loon (10), horned grebe (1), eared grebe (1), Clark's grebe (45), western grebe (20), Brandt's cormorant (18), great blue heron (1), red-tailed hawk (1), mew gull (4), California gull (12), American crow (2), and song sparrow (1). Also, five black-crowned night-herons were seen perched in the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island.

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.

Peregrine monitoring was not conducted due to inclement weather.

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