

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2009

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 #347, Week of February 23 - 27, 2009
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

In order to improve the seismic safety of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB), the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is replacing the existing SFOBB East Span with a new bridge immediately to the north. This 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.

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 requires 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 Caltrans monitor the double-crested cormorant colony and American peregrine falcon during the breeding season and prevent the birds from nesting on the existing bridge where potential impacts by construction activities could occur.

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 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 potential impacts to the breeding efforts of American peregrine falcons and double-crested cormorants on the existing East Span. The monitoring also assesses potential impacts on breeding activities of western gulls, which are now known to nest on the existing bridge and new Pier E10E. Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the *Revised Final*

Bird Monitoring and Management Plan (Caltrans 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 #8-01, Special Condition F-6.

This memo summarizes the SFOBB East Span's construction bird monitoring activities conducted by LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of February 23 - 27, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon nest monitoring from the eastern shoreline of Yerba Buena Island. Construction activities during the bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound, South-South Detour, and Self-Anchored Suspension construction sites and crew boat, tug, and barge traffic on the bay. Construction activities during the peregrine survey included work on the South-South Detour and on the new bridge sections on Yerba Buena Island. A single barge passed through the Self-Anchored Suspension construction site during the monitoring period.

The bird survey was conducted from 0918 to 1218 hours on February 24, 2009. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1505 to 1615 hours on February 27, 2009.

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: Seven double-crested cormorants were seen foraging in the study area.

Western Gull: Fifteen western gulls were observed in the study area. Five were resting on the existing bridge and ten were foraging.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: The other species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (7), American wigeon (11), Eurasian wigeon (1), scaup sp. (250), surf scoter (50), bufflehead (250), common goldeneye (2), ruddy duck (25), common loon (3), horned grebe (15), eared grebe (2), western or Clark's grebe (300), Brandt's cormorant (2), pelagic cormorant (1), American coot (3), mew gull (100), ring-billed gull (100), California gull (100), rock pigeon (1), black phoebe (1), American crow (3), and European starling (100). Six black-crowned night-herons were seen in the cypress tree just north of the study area, on Treasure Island just north of Clipper Cove.

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

At 1511 hours, an adult female peregrine falcon was observed perched at existing Pier E5 near the center of the crossbeam under the existing bridge. At 1546 hours, the female flew east toward existing Pier E6 and continued flying under the bridge until she was out of view. No other observations were recorded during the monitoring period.

Other Bird Species Observed: The other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were western gull and Anna's hummingbird. 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.

Conclusions

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

cc: Monica Gan, Caltrans