

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 #400, Week of March 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.

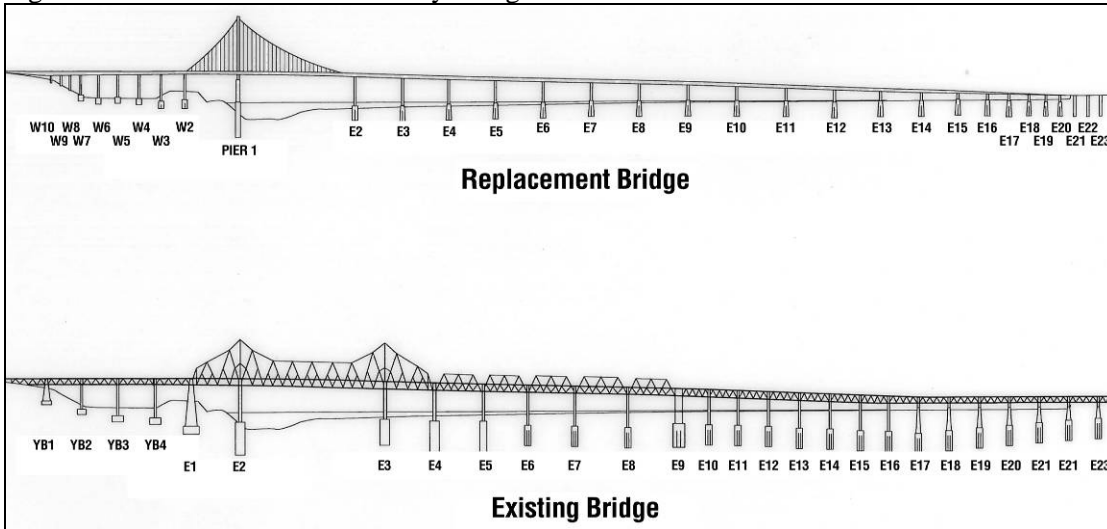
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 March 1 – 5, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from a temporary truss north of the existing bridge, and LSA conducted Canada goose monitoring from the Emeryville Crescent side of the goose exclusion fence along I-80. 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. Small cranes were working at the Oakland Touchdown and at Yerba Buena Island. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included installation of deck sections at Pier W2. Approximately 30 to 40 workers were on the temporary truss during the monitoring period.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0817 to 1117 hours on March 4, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1500 to 1600 hours on March 1, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1212 to 1312 hours on March 4, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Two brown pelicans were observed at 1000 hours, foraging in Clipper Cove. They then continued foraging to the south, toward the existing bridge.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Twenty-one double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area. Most were resting or foraging.

Western Gull: Approximately 57 western gulls were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging 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 (39), surf scoter (9), bufflehead (23), common loon (4), pied-billed grebe (1), horned grebe (2), eared grebe (2), western grebe (4), Clark's grebe (5), western grebe or Clark's grebe (125), red-tailed hawk (1), willet (1), California gull (2), belted kingfisher (1), rock pigeon (2), and black phoebe (1). In addition, seven black-crowned night-herons were observed 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.

At 1502 hours, an adult male peregrine falcon was observed perched on the traveler immediately east of existing Pier E2. At 1523 hours, this male flew east under the bridge and out of view. At 1532 hours, the male flew from existing Pier E2 to the temporary truss and copulated with the female peregrine falcon. At 1533 hours, the male flew to the eastern end of the temporary truss and perched. Both the male and

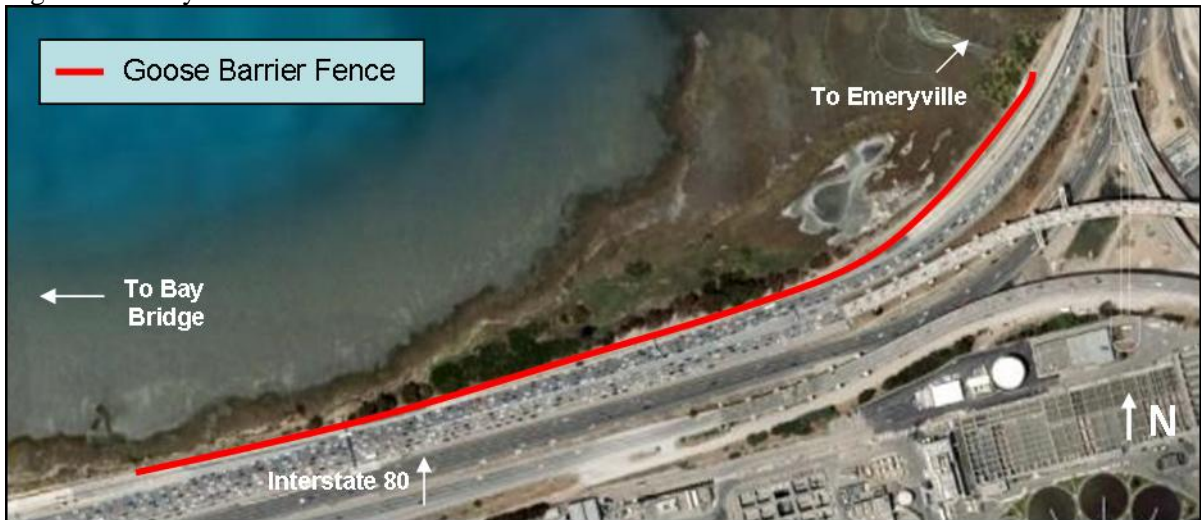
female remained perched in these locations on the temporary truss for the remainder of the monitoring period.

Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were brown pelican, double-crested cormorant, western gull, rock pigeon, and Anna’s hummingbird. 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.

Figure 3. Emeryville Crescent Goose Exclusion Fence



This is the first goose monitoring report for the 2010 nesting season. Eight Canada geese were observed in the vicinity of the goose fence:

- Two adults were on the ground approximately 61 meters (200 feet) north of the “300 – 400 feet” marked fence interval;
- Two adults were on the ground approximately 91 meters (300 feet) north of the “600 – 700 feet” marked fence interval;
- Two adults were on the ground approximately 122 meters (400 feet) north of the “900 – 1,000 feet” marked fence interval; and
- Two adults were flying approximately 12 meters (40 feet) north of the “1,400 – 1,500 feet” marked fence interval.

The fence is in good condition.

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