

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 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 #406, Week of April 12 – 16, 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.

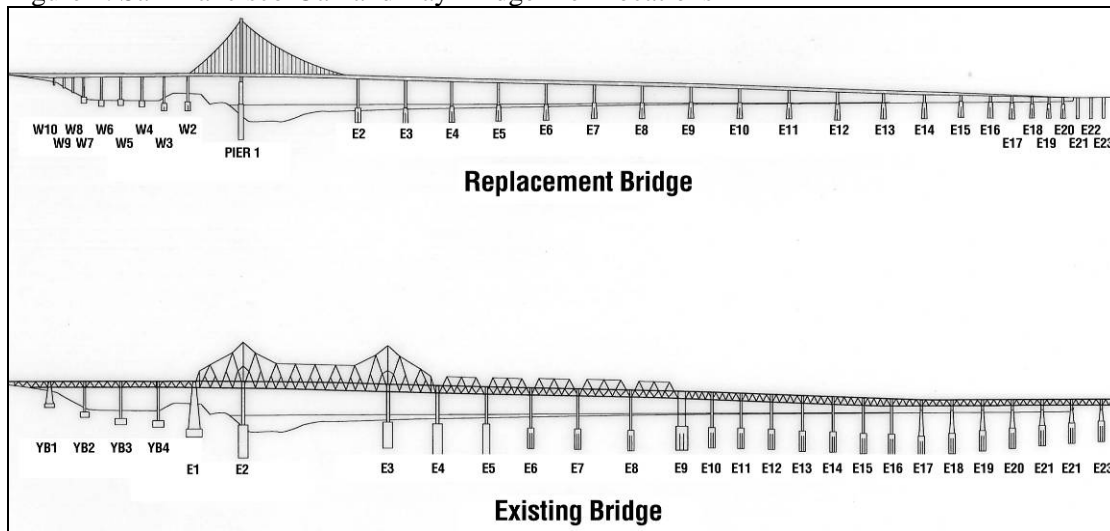
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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) during the week of April 12 – 16, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from Pier W2 site on Yerba Buena Island. Construction activities during the weekly bird survey included various activities at the South-South Detour and Self-Anchored Suspension construction sites and crew boats on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included welding on deck sections in the Self-Anchored Suspension construction area.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1035 to 1335 hours on April 15, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1130 to 1230 hours on April 16. Canada goose monitoring was not conducted.

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 75 double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area, including approximately 40 perched under the existing bridge. The others were resting, flying, or foraging in other parts of the study area.

Western Gull: Approximately 37 western gulls were observed in the study area. The gulls were resting, foraging, or flying.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (2), greater scaup (22), surf scoter (4), bufflehead (32), red-throated loon (1), common loon (7), western grebe or Clark's grebe (68), Brandt's cormorant (4), pigeon guillemot (1), rock pigeon (11), and American crow (1). In addition, a flock of approximately 15 small, unidentified sandpipers (likely western or least sandpipers) were seen flying low over San Francisco Bay.

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

American peregrine falcon nests on the SFOBB East Span are monitored in addition to 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.

The adult male peregrine falcon was observed incubating at existing Pier E2 in the same nest site used in 2009, a trapezoid-shaped cavity on the north-facing side of the north leg of the pier. At 1149 hours, the male flew from the nest site toward the temporary truss. Four eggs were observed in the nest. At 1154 hours, the male flew back to the nest and resumed incubation. At 1205 hours, the adult female flew to the traveler east of existing Pier E2. She perched in a location not visible from the Pier W2 monitoring site and was not observed again for the remainder of the monitoring period.

Based on previous observations, full-time incubation is estimated to have started in mid-March. If the nest is successful, hatching is expected to occur in late April.

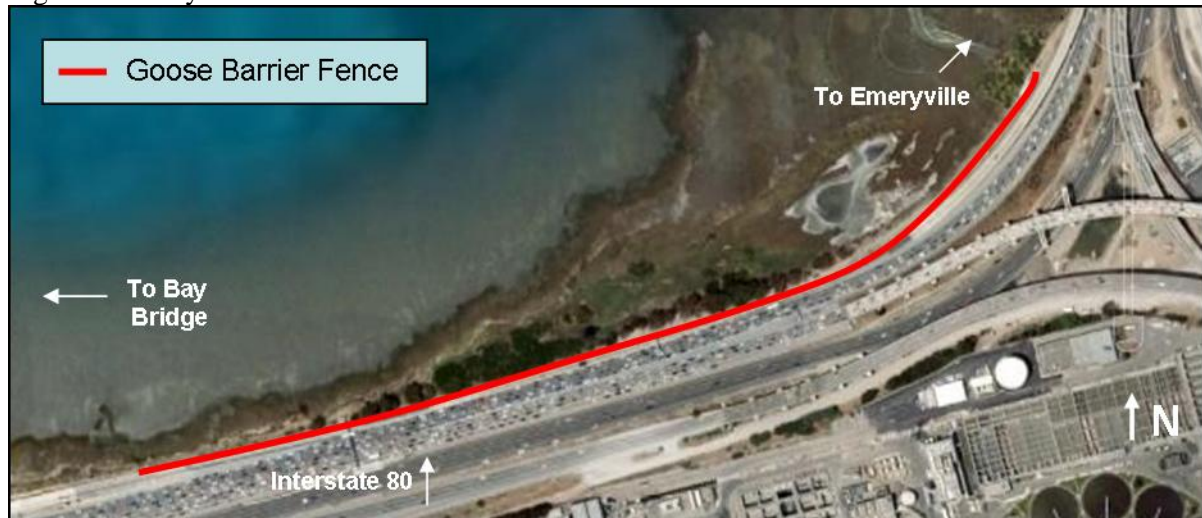
Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant and western gull. The peregrine monitor does not count the number of individuals of other bird species, because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for peregrine falcons.

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 was not conducted this week.

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