

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 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 #415, Week of June 14 – 18, 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.

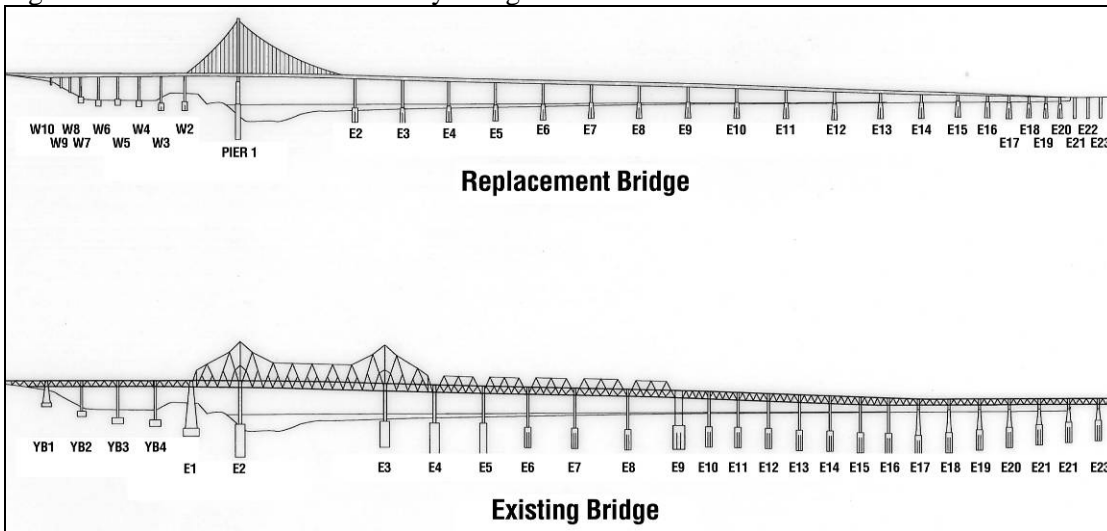
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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), Garcia and Associates (GANDA), and Marcus H. Bole & Associates (MHBA) during the week of June 14 – 18, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from Pier W2 on Yerba Buena Island, and LSA conducted Canada goose monitoring from the Emeryville Crescent side of the goose exclusion fence along I-80. 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 and sand-blasting.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1120 to 1420 hours on June 15, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1400 to 1445 hours on June 16, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1420 to 1500 hours on June 16, 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 274 cormorants were observed in the study area. Most were perched under the existing bridge and others were resting, flying, or foraging in other parts of the study area. Seven individuals were seen carrying nesting material.

Western Gull: Approximately 19 western gulls were observed in the study area, resting, foraging, or flying. An active nest was observed on the base of Pier E17 of the new bridge westbound structure.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were bufflehead (1), Brandt's cormorant (5), great blue heron (2), osprey (1), Caspian tern (1), and pigeon guillemot (4). In addition, 3 black-crowned night-herons were seen in the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island, adjacent to Clipper Cove.

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 to as much as seven days a week for an active nest adjacent to active construction or demolition.

No peregrine falcons were observed during the monitoring period. Based on previous observations, all three juveniles fledged during the first week of June.

Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant, western gull, and house finch. 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 a 2,800-foot (850-meter) long fence that was designed to exclude Canada geese from entering the I-80 roadway.

Figure 3. Emeryville Crescent Goose Exclusion Fence



Thirty-eight Canada geese were observed in the vicinity of the goose fence. Thirty-five adults were approximately 152 meters (500 feet) north of the “0 – 100 feet” marked fence interval and three adults were approximately 274 meters (900 feet) north of the “100 – 200 feet” marked fence interval.

In general the goose fence is in fair condition, but in the “2,300 – 2,400 feet” marked fence interval, fencing material has torn away from the support post and there are tears in the fence. Also, the fence has torn away from the corner post at the western end of the fence line.

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