

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 19, 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 #416, Week of June 21 – 25, 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.

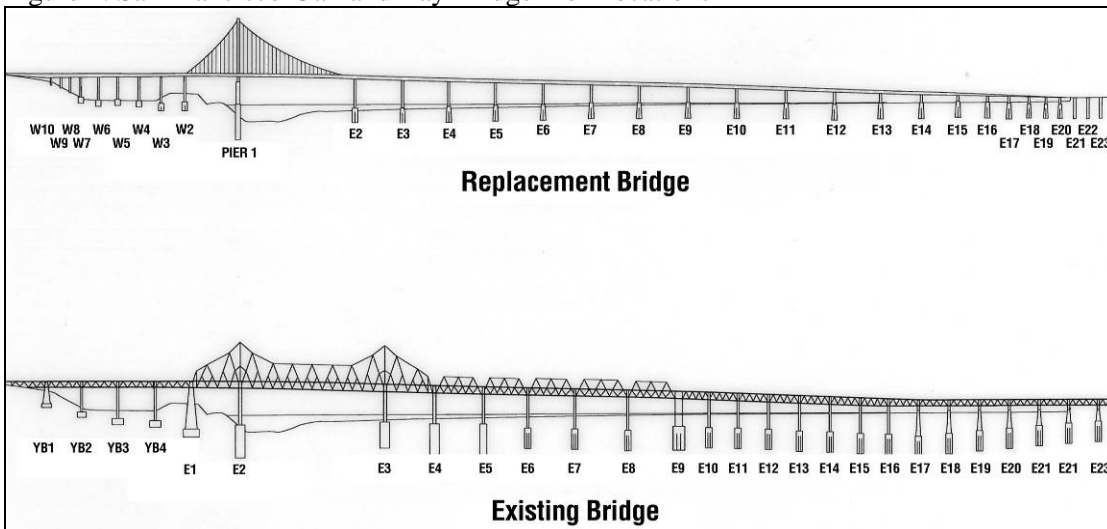
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 June 21 – 25, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA 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 (SAS) construction sites and crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. The Left Coast Lifter crane was working at Tower 1 (T1). Construction activities during the peregrine monitoring included welding work and sand-blasting of the concrete towers.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0845 to 0945 hours and from 1050 to 1250 hours on June 25, 2010. From 0945 to 1050 hours, the monitoring team assisted two men on a small boat that had run out of gas. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1530 to 1630 hours on June 23, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1515 to 1540 hours on June 25, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 1215 hours, one brown pelican was seen flying under the orthotropic box girder at the SAS construction site.

Peregrine Falcon: At 1215 hours, one peregrine falcon was seen briefly as it was flying west between the existing and new bridges. The bird was too far away to determine its age or gender.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 261 double-crested cormorants were observed. Approximately 250 cormorants were perched under the existing bridge and 16 were foraging in other parts of the study area.

Western Gull: Approximately 23 western gulls were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging in the study area. One active nest was noted on the base of the westbound structure at new Pier E19.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: The other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (8), western grebe (11), Clark's grebe (15), western grebe or Clark's grebe (55), Brandt's cormorant (6), pelagic cormorant (1), great blue heron (2), snowy egret (1), Heermann's gull (1), pigeon guillemot (4), and song sparrow (2).

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.

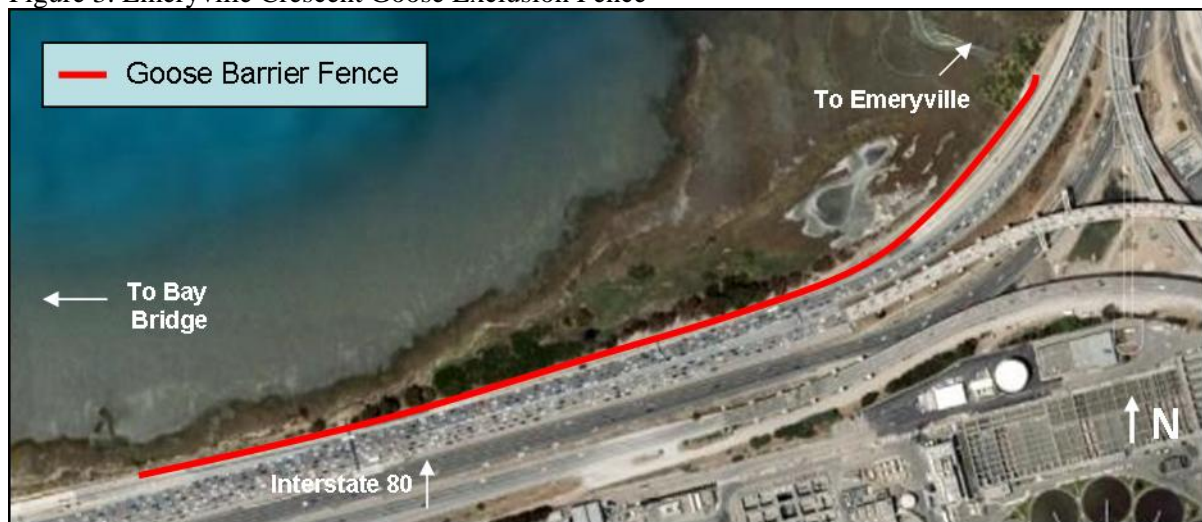
No peregrine falcons were observed during the monitoring period. Based on previous observations, all three juveniles fledged during the first week of June.

Other Bird Species Observed: The other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant, western gull, and common raven. 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 from 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



No Canada geese were observed.

The fence material (black plastic mesh) has pulled away from the top wire of the fence just west of the “1,400-foot” post and is torn within the “1,600 – 1,700 feet” marked fence interval (near the 50 mph sign). In addition, the corner post at the far western end of the fence needs to be reset. It is leaning inward toward the roadway and the fence is sagging.

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