

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 #417, Week of June 28 – July 2, 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.

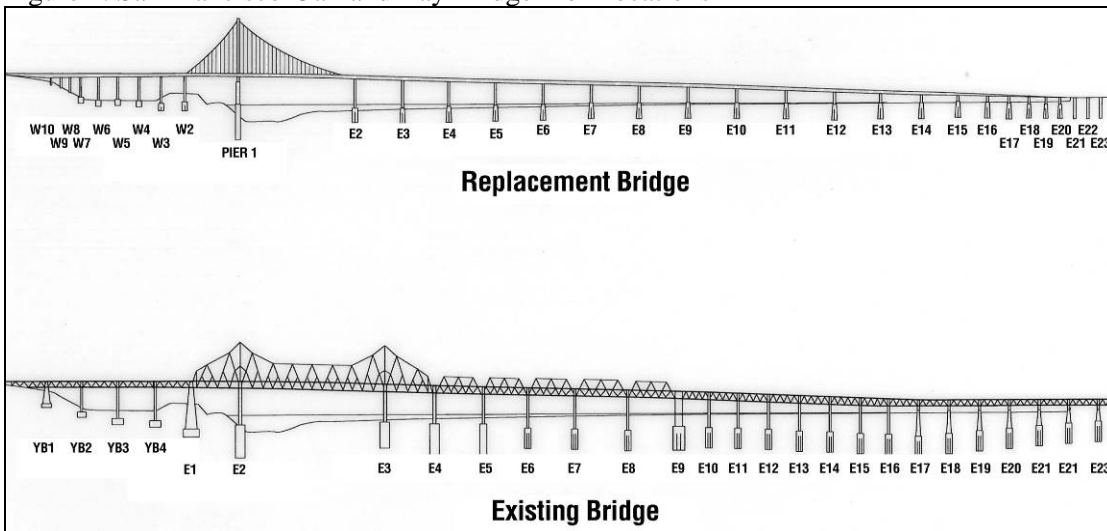
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 28 – July 2, 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 construction sites and crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine monitoring included welding, sand-blasting of the concrete towers, and erection of scaffolding for Tower 1 (T1).

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0929 to 1229 hours on July 2, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1410 to 1510 hours on June 29, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1255 to 1335 hours on July 2, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 1123 hours, one brown pelican was seen flying south under the existing bridge between Piers E2 and E3.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 210 double-crested cormorants were observed. Approximately 175 cormorants were perched under the existing bridge, 15 were on the cable-crossing structure, 15 were foraging, and 5 were carrying nesting material.

Western Gull: Approximately 40 western gulls were observed. Fifteen were resting under the existing bridge and twenty-five were foraging.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: The other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (45), western grebe or Clark's grebe (45), Brandt's cormorant (7), great blue heron (1), black-crowned night-heron (1), Caspian tern (3), pigeon guillemot (4), and song sparrow (1). In addition, 25 Canada geese were on the water in the northern part of Clipper Cove, just outside the study area.

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.

At 1428 hours, a juvenile peregrine falcon was observed perched on the south side railing of the Skyway, approximately 3 meters (10 feet) east of the 50 mph sign. At 1435 hours, this juvenile flew west under the new bridge and perched on the walkway structure that connects the east and westbound lanes of the Skyway. No other peregrines were observed during the monitoring period.

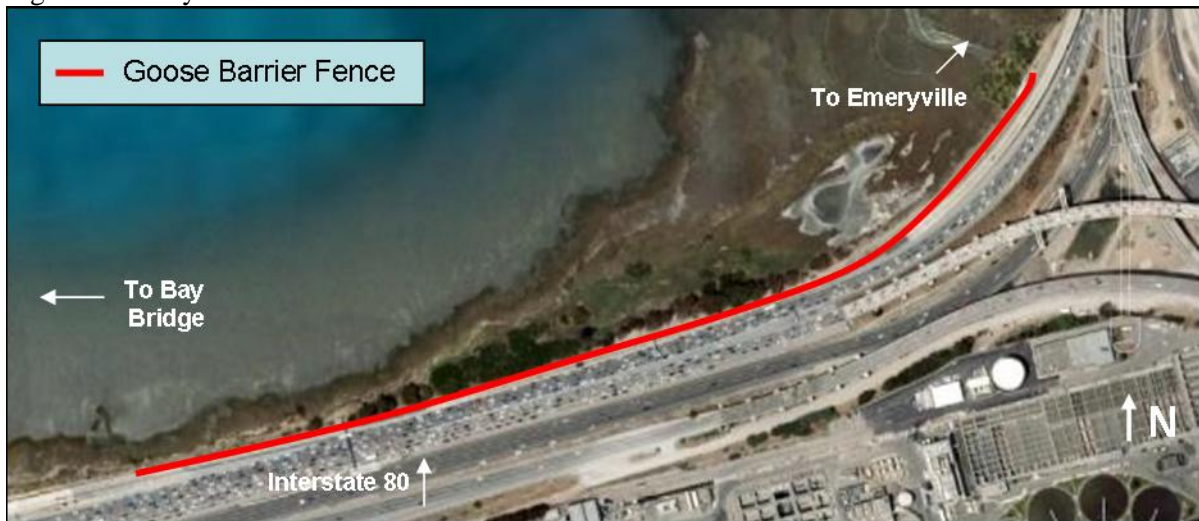
Three juveniles fledged during the first week of June and at least one is still present in the project area. The adults are likely present also, but were not seen during the monitoring period.

Other Bird Species Observed: The other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant, western gull, and common raven. Double-crested cormorants were observed building nests on the existing bridge. 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



Four Canada geese (adults) were observed approximately 61 meters (200 feet) north of the “1,400 – 1,500 feet” marked fence interval and five (3 adults and 2 young) were seen approximately 183 meters (600 feet) north of the “1,600 – 1,700 feet” marked fence interval.

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