

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 4, 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 #418, Week of July 5 – 9, 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.

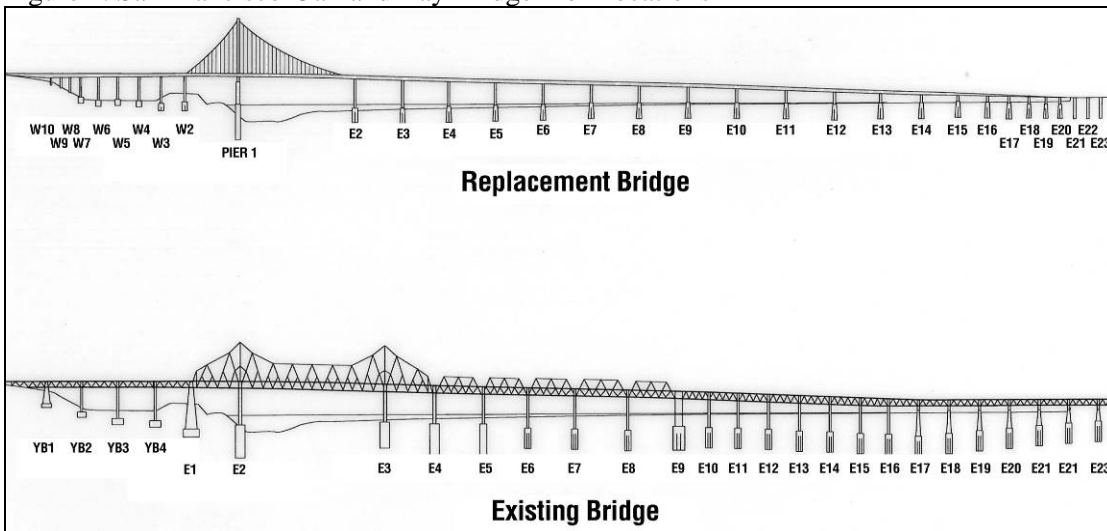
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 July 5 – 9, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from the Skyway, 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 boats on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included staging and preparations for the SAS tower construction.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1110 to 1410 hours on July 9, 2010. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1400 to 1445 hours on July 8, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1530 to 1550 hours on July 9, 2010.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 1337 hours, one brown pelican was observed foraging in Clipper Cove. This individual was seen again in Clipper Cove at 1400 hours.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 300 cormorants were observed in the study area. Approximately 250 cormorants were perched under the existing bridge and the others were resting, flying, or foraging in other parts of the study area.

Western Gull: Approximately 42 gulls were observed in the study area. Eighteen were perched under the existing bridge, three were under the new bridge, and twenty-one were foraging and/or flying in other parts of 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), western grebe (22), Clark's grebe (17), Brandt's cormorant (4), great blue heron (1), pigeon guillemot (2), and rock pigeon (1). In addition, 4 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. The last sighting of a juvenile peregrine was on June 29, 2010, when a juvenile was observed perched on the south side railing of

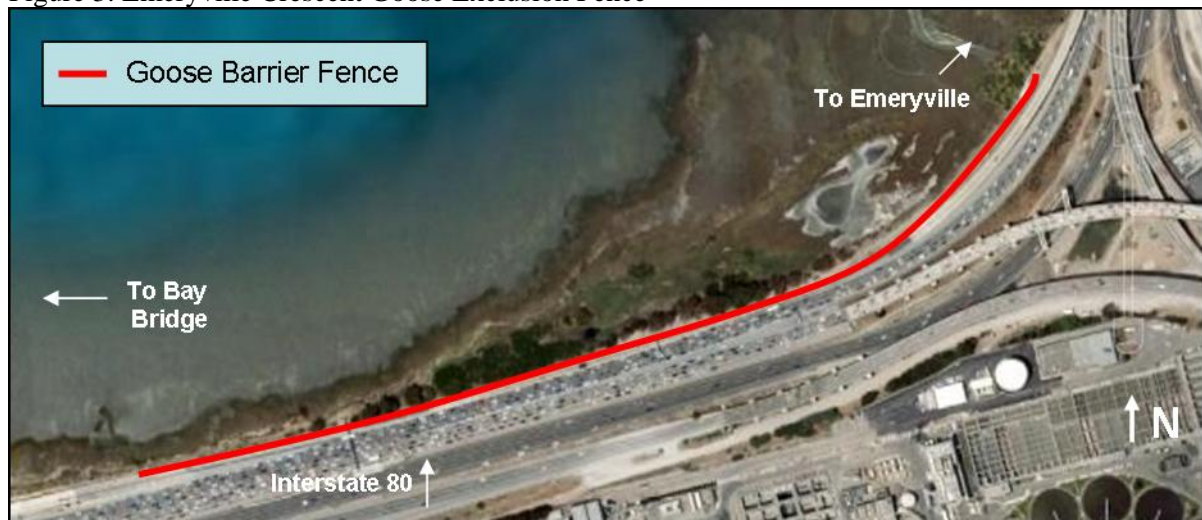
the Skyway, approximately 10 feet east of the 50 mph sign. Three juveniles that fledged during the first week of June have dispersed from the nest site at Pier E2 of the existing site.

Other Bird Species Observed: The other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant and western gull. Double-crested cormorants were observed in all phases of nesting on the existing bridge, including nest building, incubation, and fledging young. 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



Nine Canada geese were observed in the vicinity of the goose fence. Five adults/young of the year were approximately 122 meters (400 feet) north of the “0 - 100 feet” marked fence interval and four adults were about 30 meters (100 feet) north of the “1,300 – 1,400 feet” marked fence interval.

In general, the goose fence is in fair condition, but the fence has torn away from the corner post at the western end of the fence line, and there are minor holes and/or tears at other locations. The fence should be inspected by Caltrans and repaired as necessary.

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

