

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 #419, Week of July 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.

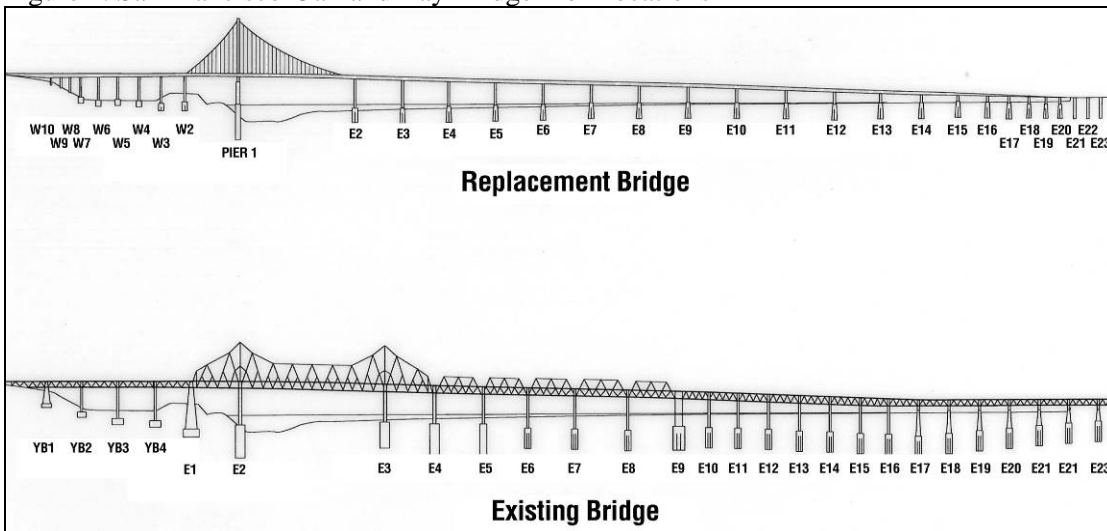
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 LSA Associates (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of July 12 – 16, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat 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.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 0915 to 1222 hours on July 16, 2010. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1250 to 1316 hours on July 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 265 cormorants were observed in the study area, including about 180 perched under the existing bridge and 60 (mostly juveniles) perched on the cable-crossing structure. The others were resting, flying, or foraging in other parts of the study area. There were several active nests under the existing bridge (between Piers E7 and E10) that contained well-developed juveniles.

Western Gull: Approximately 50 gulls were observed flying, foraging, or resting on structures in the study area. Fourteen active nests were observed. One nest was on new Pier E16 of the westbound structure and the rest were on the existing bridge (one each on Piers E2, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9, E11, E14, and E18 and two each on Piers E15 and E16). Individual nests were located on the bases of the piers or in nooks in the piers at varying heights above the pier bases.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (12), western grebe (4), Clark's grebe (4), Brandt's cormorant (7), great blue heron (3), black-crowned night-heron (4), pigeon guillemot (2), and osprey (1) on the base of new Pier E7 of the eastbound structure, eating a fish. In addition, three 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

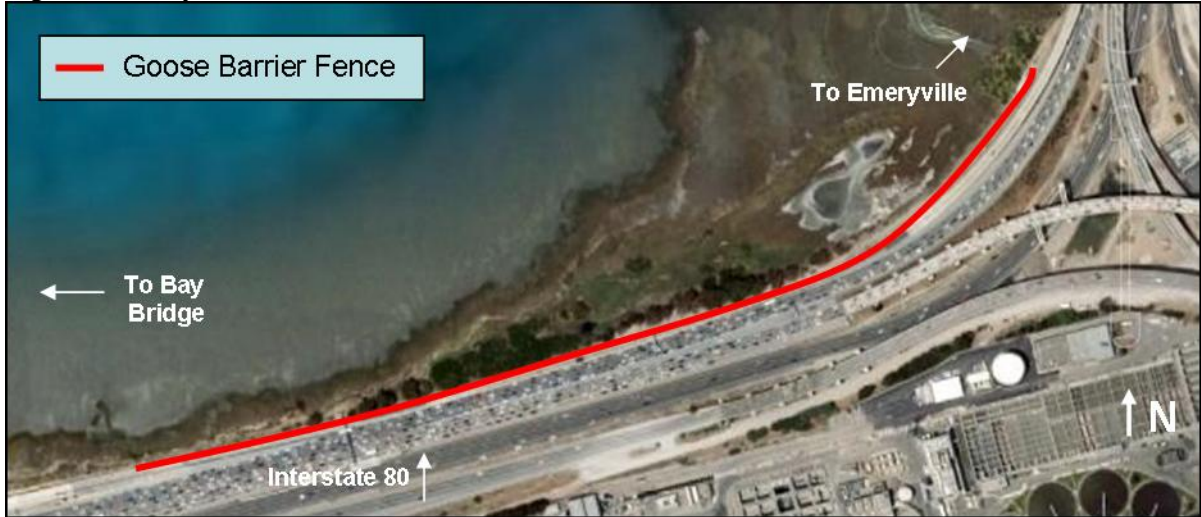
American peregrine falcon nests on the SFOBB East Span are monitored in addition to and separately from weekly bird monitoring in active construction areas. The peregrines are monitored at least weekly from December until the end of the peregrine nesting season. At the discretion of the lead peregrine 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.

Peregrine falcon monitoring has concluded for the 2009-2010 nesting season. Monitoring for the 2010-2011 season will begin in December 2010.

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



No Canada geese were observed in the vicinity of the goose fence.

A 3-meter (10-foot) section of fence has torn away from the top guide wire at the “1,400 - 1,500 feet” marked fence interval. There is also a tear in the fence below the light post at the “1,600 – 1,700 feet” marked fence interval. The fence is still sagging at the corner post at the west end of the 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