

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 14, 2008

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 #317, Week of July 28 – August 1, 2008  
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

In order to improve the seismic safety of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB), the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is replacing the existing East Span with a new bridge immediately to the north. This is a multi-year effort that will involve a number of construction activities on land as well as in the Bay. Some of these activities could potentially affect federally endangered or threatened bird species and other bird species of special concern.

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 Caltrans monitor the double-crested cormorant colony and American peregrine falcon during the breeding season and prevent the birds from nesting on the existing bridge where potential impacts by construction activities could occur.

As required by the USFWS Biological Opinion and CDFG 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 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 potential impacts to the breeding efforts of American peregrine falcons and double-crested cormorants on the existing East Span. The monitoring also assesses potential impacts on breeding activities of western gulls, which are now known to nest on the existing bridge and new pier E10E. Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the *Revised Final Bird Monitoring and Management Plan* (Caltrans 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, Special Condition F-6.

This memo summarizes the East Span construction bird monitoring activities conducted by LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of July 28 – August 1, 2008.

### **Bird Monitoring Activities**

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. Construction activities during the bird survey included in-water pile driving near Pier T1 and various other construction activities at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound, South-South Detour, and Self-Anchored Suspension construction sites.

The bird survey was conducted from 0925 to 1230 hours on July 30.

### **Results**

#### **Monitoring of Active Construction Areas**

*California Least Tern:* No least terns were observed in the study area.

*California Brown Pelican:* Two brown pelicans were observed. At 0929 hours, one was seen flying over the bay approximately 300 meters (984 feet) south of the Oakland Touchdown. At 1155 hours, one was observed flying between the Pier T1 construction area and the Torpedo Building on Yerba Buena Island (YBI) (right through the active work area).

*Peregrine Falcon:* No peregrine falcons were observed.

*Double-crested Cormorant:* Approximately 300 to 400 double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area. About 80 cormorants (mostly juveniles) were perched on the cable-crossing structure. Seventy to ninety cormorants were perched on the foundation of existing Pier E7 and eighty to one hundred cormorants were on the foundation of existing Pier E8, including many juveniles being fed by adults. A few juveniles were still in nests under the existing bridge. Activity in the nesting colony is winding down and most of the young have fledged.

*Western Gull:* Approximately 90 western gulls (including 12 juveniles at nest sites) were observed. Approximately 40 gulls were observed foraging for fish stunned or killed by the pressure wave from pile-driving at the Pier T1 construction site. Many gulls were observed to scatter at the initiation of pile-driving and began investigating the water surface for fish, while others remained perched nearby. As soon as the pile-driving stopped, gulls were observed foraging in the water for moribund fish.

*Other Observations of Birds and Marine Mammals:* The other species observed during the bird survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were harbor seal (5), common goldeneye (1), western grebe (4), Clark's grebe (14), Brandt's cormorant (12), pelagic cormorant (1) Heermann's gull (1), elegant tern (3), common murre (2), and pigeon guillemot (3).

### **American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring**

Peregrine falcon monitoring has been concluded for this year's nesting season, as observations to date indicate that the East Span nesting territory is not occupied this season.

### **Conclusions**

The monitors did not observe any indications that birds were disturbed due to the East Span construction activities.

cc: Monica Gan