

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 29, 2009

**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 #374, Week of August 31 – September 4, 2009  
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.

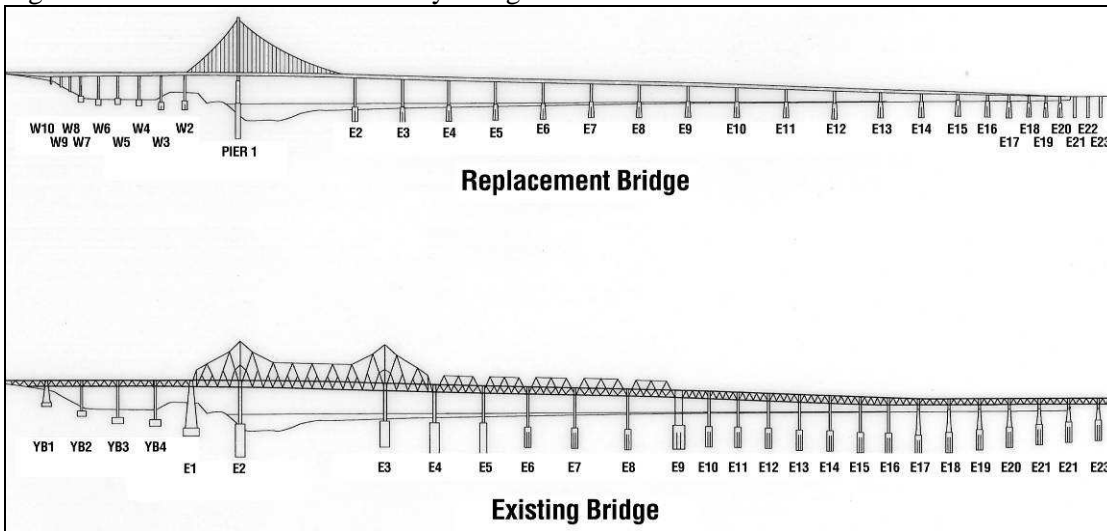
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 potential impacts to the behavior of American peregrine falcons and double-crested cormorants on the existing SFOBB East Span. The monitoring also assesses potential impacts on breeding activities of western gulls, which are now known to nest on both the existing and new bridges. Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the *Revised Final Bird Monitoring and Management Plan* (California Department of Transportation 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. In addition, the 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



This memo summarizes the SFOBB project bird monitoring activities conducted by LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of August 31 – September 4, 2009.

### **Bird Monitoring Activities**

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. LSA conducted Canada goose monitoring from the Emeryville Crescent side of the goose exclusion fence along I-80. Construction during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound, South-South Detour, and Self-Anchored Suspension construction sites and crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1340 to 1645 hours on August 31, 2009. Canada goose monitoring was conducted from 1715 to 1752 hours on August 31, 2009.

### **Results**

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

*California Least Tern:* No least terns were observed.

*California Brown Pelican:* Two brown pelicans were observed. At 1420 hours, one was resting on the water in Clipper Cove. At 1548 hours, one flew north to south between Piers E9 and E10 of the existing bridge and proceeded to forage south of Piers E4 to E8.

*Peregrine Falcon:* No peregrine falcons were observed.

*Double-crested Cormorant:* Approximately 200 cormorants were observed in the study area, including about 50 perched on the cable-crossing structure (nearly all juveniles), 140 perched under the existing bridge, and 10 in flight or perched in other parts of the study area. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

*Western Gull:* Approximately 25 adults and 10 juveniles were observed in the study area. Most were roosting on the existing bridge. All juveniles have fledged.

*Observations of Additional Bird Species:* Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were common loon (1), western grebe (41), Clark's grebe (55), Brandt's cormorant (21), and great blue heron (1).

Five black-crowned night-herons were observed in the cypress tree on the north shore of Clipper Cove (just outside the study area).

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

Peregrine falcon monitoring has concluded for the 2008/2009 nesting season. Monitoring for the 2009/2010 season will resume in December 2009.

### **Canada Goose Monitoring along the I-80 Roadway Adjacent to the Emeryville Crescent**

No Canada geese were observed. This is the last goose survey for the 2009 nesting season. Monitoring will resume in March 2010.

The top of the fence mesh has pulled away from the "900 foot" post (next to the "Buses Only Next Exit" sign) and from a post at the west end of the "1,200- to 1,300 foot" marked fence interval. Otherwise the fence is in good condition.

Five red-necked phalaropes and three greater yellowlegs were observed in the salt pond north of the "600 to 800 foot" marked fence interval. An immature white-tailed kite was seen on a coyote brush plant at the east 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