

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 #375, Week of September 7 – 11, 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.

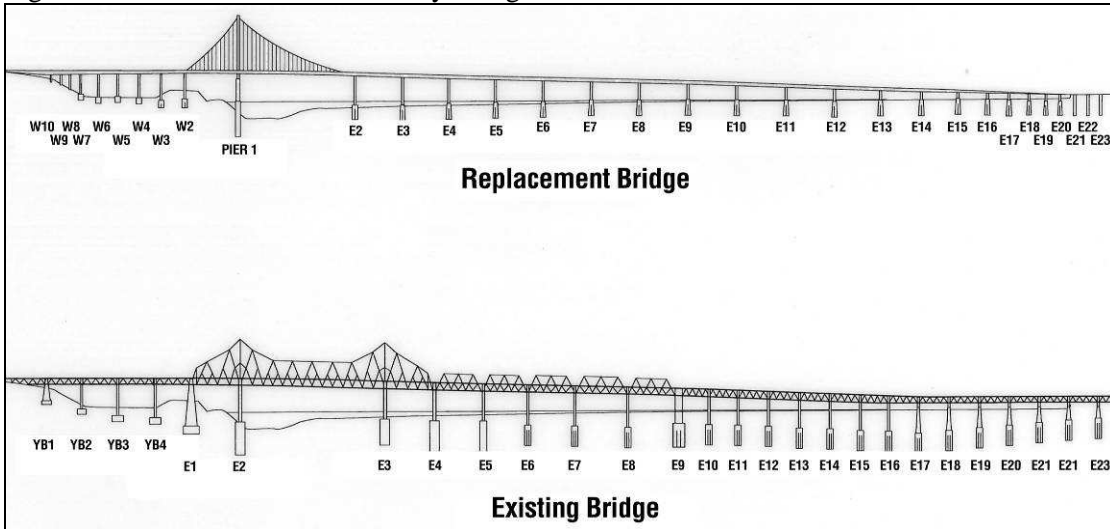
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 (Figure 2). 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 September 7 – 11, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. 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 0845 to 1145 hours on September 11, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Sixteen brown pelicans were observed:

- At 0855 hours, one was flying over Pier E9 of the existing bridge;
- At 0900 hours, one was flying north, about 100 to 150 meters (328 to 492 feet) north of Tower 1 (T1) and another was on the water in the same area;
- At 0905 hours, one was flying around T1;
- At 0910 hours, one was flying under the existing bridge at Pier E2;
- At 0913 hours, six were foraging in Clipper Cove;
- At 1000 hours, one was on the water on the south side of existing Pier E17 and another was perched on a piling south of the existing bridge near the Oakland Touchdown;
- At 1035 hours, two were flying north under the existing bridge near Pier E4; a
- At 1055 hours, one was flying over Clipper Cove; and

- At 1140 hours, one flew to and landed on the base of new Pier E18E.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 200 cormorants were observed in the study area, including about 60 perched on the cable-crossing structure (adults and juveniles), 110 perched under the existing bridge, and 30 in flight, foraging, 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 45 gulls were observed in the study area, including 15 perched under the existing bridge.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (15), common loon (1), Clark's grebe (2), Clark's or western grebe (27), Brandt's cormorant (43), pelagic cormorant (1), California gull (1), Caspian tern (1), Forster's tern (1), and belted kingfisher (1).

Four black-crowned night-herons and a great blue heron 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

Canada goose monitoring has concluded for the 2009 nesting season. Monitoring for the 2010 season will begin in March 2010.

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