

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 6, 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 #378, Week of September 28 – October 2, 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.

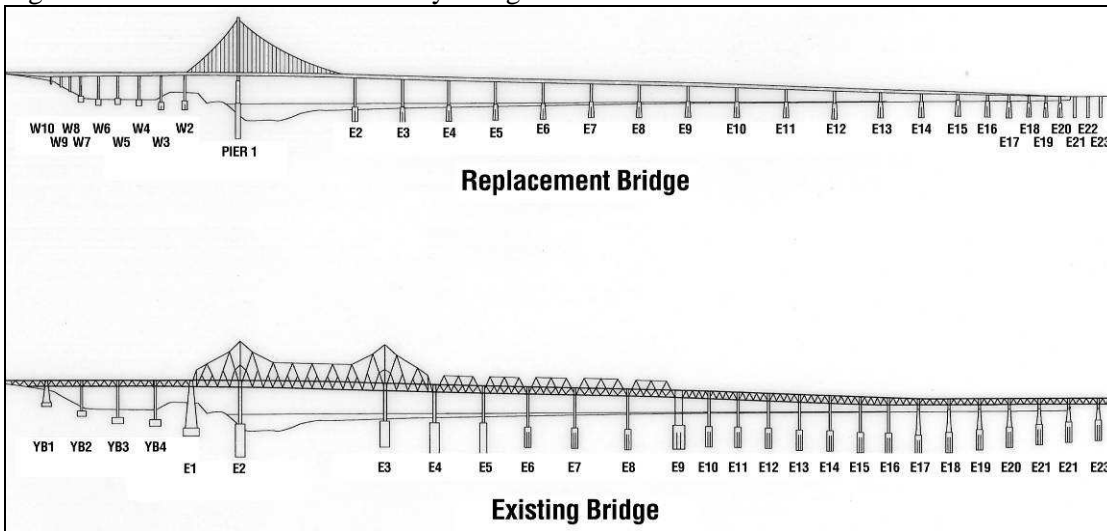
Figure 1. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project Location Map



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 28 - October 2, 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 0925 to 1225 hours on September 30, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Eight brown pelicans were observed:

- At 0938 hours, five were resting on the south edge of the cable-crossing structure;
- At 0952 hours, one was flying north to south between existing Piers E3 and E4 and then proceeded to fly east along the south side of the existing bridge toward the Oakland Touchdown;
- At 1013 hours, one was resting on the water in Clipper Cove and one was soaring over the Cove; and
- At 1203 hours, three were flying north from the area near existing Piers E5 and E6, but these individuals were not included in the total count because they were likely among the individuals seen earlier (0938 hours) on the cable-crossing structure.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 75 to 90 cormorants were observed in the study area, including 25 to 40 perched on the cable-crossing structure and about 50 roosting under the existing bridge. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 70 gulls were observed in the study area. Most were resting on the existing bridge and on the Bay.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were horned grebe (1), western grebe (22), Clark's grebe (14), Brandt's cormorant (31), Heermann's gull (1), and belted kingfisher (1).

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