

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 2, 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 #386, Week of November 23 – 27, 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

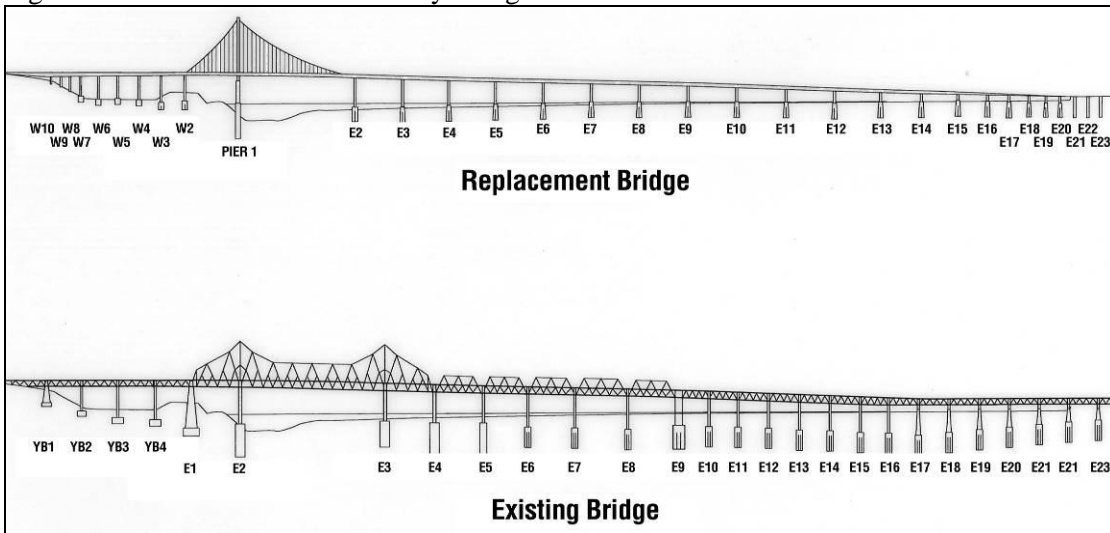


The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also 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: 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 November 23 – 27, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. Construction activities during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension construction site.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1310 to 1610 hours on November 24, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: The bird monitors recorded 19 observations of brown pelicans (the observations likely included repeated sightings of some individual pelicans):

- At 1337 hours, seven flew over the south side of Clipper Cove;
- At 1405 hours, three were resting on wood pilings next to Yerba Buena Island, near the Torpedo Building;
- At 1422 hours, four were resting on the south side of the cable-crossing structure; and
- At 1355 hours, five were resting on a floating dock (just north of the study area) in Clipper Cove.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 400 double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area; approximately 350 were roosting under the existing bridge east of Pier E12 and the remainder were flying, resting, and/or foraging in other parts of the study area (including 30 in Clipper Cove). No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 50 western gulls were observed resting on structures in the Bay, flying, and/or foraging in the study area.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were greater scaup (280), surf scoter (70), bufflehead (170), common goldeneye (3), ruddy duck (40), common loon (2), horned grebe (7), western grebe (12), Clark's grebe (6), western or Clark's grebe (150), Brandt's cormorant (14), California gull (20), 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 begin in December 2009.

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



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