

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 28, 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 #387, Week of November 30 – December 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

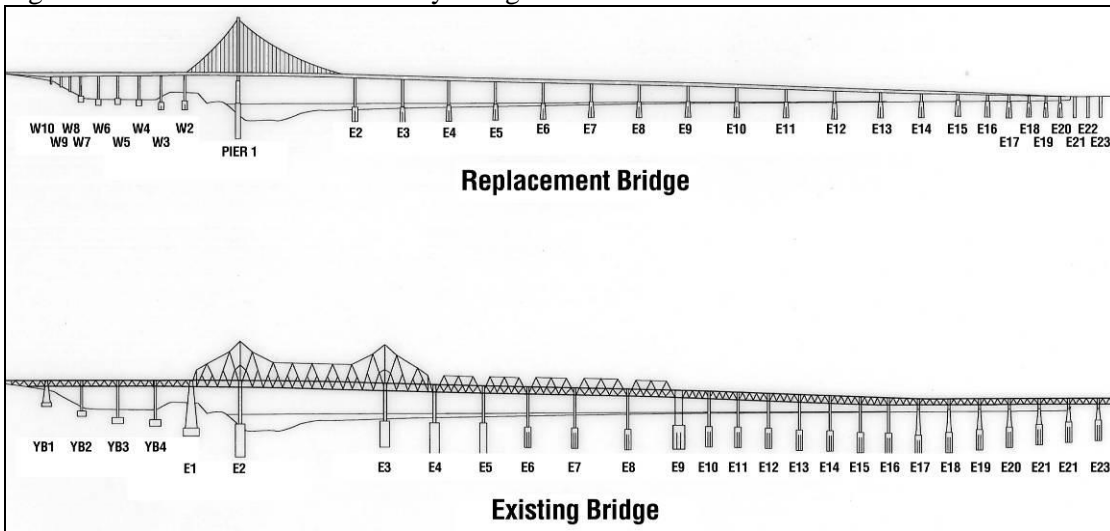


The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also 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: 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 30 – December 4, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring (the first survey for the 2009-2010 nesting season) from the temporary truss of the Self-Anchored Suspension (SAS). Construction activities during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the SAS, South-South Detour, and Oakland Touchdown construction sites. In addition, general construction and crew boat activities occurred at new Pier E2. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included

work on the new access trestle to T1 and demolition of existing bridge portions no longer in use on Yerba Buena Island.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1332 to 1634 hours on November 30, 2009. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1140 to 1240 hours on December 4, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

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

- At 1339 hours, one was foraging in the Port of Oakland Outer Harbor about 500 meters (1,640 feet) south of the Oakland Touchdown;
- At 1419 hours, one flew from Clipper Cove south under the existing bridge;
- At 1422 hours, two were perched on the cable-crossing structure; and
- At 1459 hours, one was flying south of the existing bridge from the direction of the cable-crossing structure.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 1,675 cormorants were observed in the study area. About 1,600 cormorants were roosting under the existing bridge between Piers E8 and E22, and the remainder were flying or foraging in other parts of the study area. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 30 gulls were observed in the study area. Ten were perched under the existing bridge and twenty were flying and/or foraging.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: The other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (14), greater scaup (175), surf scoter (50), bufflehead (75), ruddy duck (25), common loon (2), horned grebe (10), western grebe (60), Clark's grebe (25), Brandt's cormorant (23), American coot (4), mew gull (35), California gull (15), and belted kingfisher (1).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

At 1140 hours, a juvenile peregrine falcon was perched on the handrail on the north side of Pier E2 of the existing bridge at the location of the 2009 nest site. The juvenile was assumed to be the female born at the site in 2009. At 1204 hours, the juvenile flew around Pier E2 and flushed an adult peregrine that was apparently perched on the south side of Pier E2. Both birds flew back to the Pier E2 perch site, and the juvenile entered the former nest site. The juvenile called several times, vocalizing an e-chup as the adult remained perched on the adjacent railing. At 1210 hours, the juvenile flew to the north and out of view. The adult remained perched until 1222 hours, at which time it flew to Pier E5 of the existing bridge and landed on the cross beam just below the lower deck.

At 1235 hours, the adult flew to the east and out of view. Peregrines were not observed during the remaining 5 minutes of the monitoring period.

Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were double-crested cormorant and western gull. The number of other bird species observed during the peregrine falcon monitoring is not recorded because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for peregrine falcons.

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 other indications that birds were disturbed due to SFOBB Project construction activities.

cc: Stefan Galvez, California Department of Transportation