

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 30, 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 #389, Week of December 14 – 18, 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

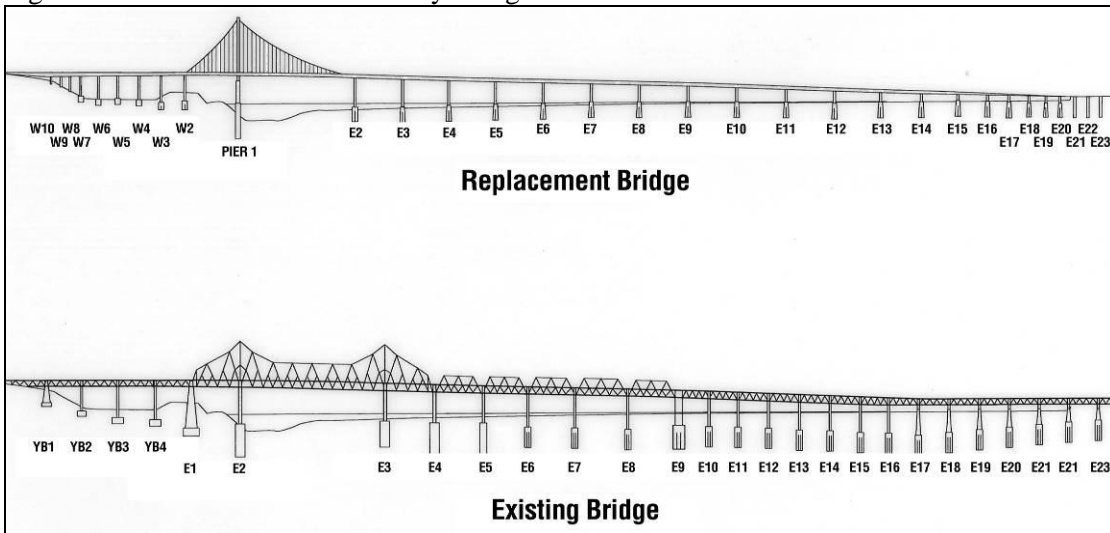


The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also 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 December 14 – 18, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon monitoring from a temporary truss north of the existing bridge. Construction activities during the weekly bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Self-Anchored Suspension, South-South Detour, and Oakland Touchdown. Work on the bay included crew boat traffic and tugs moving the Left Coast Lifter crane. Construction activities during

the peregrine falcon monitoring included work on the temporary trusses, work on the 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 0840 to 1145 hours on December 14, 2009. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 0953 to 1113 hours on December 17, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: The bird monitors recorded 11 observations of brown pelicans (the observations may have included repeated sightings of some individual pelicans):

- At 0850 hours, one was flying along the south shore of the Oakland Touchdown;
- At 1005 hours, one was flying and then perched on the pier at the southeast corner of Treasure Island;
- At 1012 hours, one was on the water adjacent to T1 and another two were flying about 100 meters (328 feet) north of T1;
- At 1040 hours, one was flying north between Piers E7 and E8 of the existing bridge and another was flying and then landed on the cable-crossing structure;
- At 1050 hours, one was flying south between Piers E20 and E21 of the existing bridge;
- At 1955 hours, one was foraging in the Port of Oakland Outer Harbor; and
- At 1115 hours, one landed on the south side of existing Pier E21 and one was flying on the north side of the eastern bridge abutment at the Oakland Touchdown.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 10 cormorants were observed in the study area. Most were flying over the bay or perched on rocks and pilings. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 20 western gulls were observed in the study area. Most were perched on the existing bridge or flying, and smaller numbers were resting on the water.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (1), greater scaup (238), surf scoter (164), bufflehead (142), common goldeneye (4), ruddy duck (73), common loon (1), horned grebe (20), eared grebe (2), western grebe (25), Clark's grebe (18), western or Clark's grebe (75), Brandt's cormorant (1), pelagic cormorant (1), spotted sandpiper (2), mew gull (110), California gull (100), belted kingfisher (1), black phoebe (1), and American crow (1). In addition, five black-crowned night-herons were seen in the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island (north shore of Clipper Cove), just outside the study area.

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

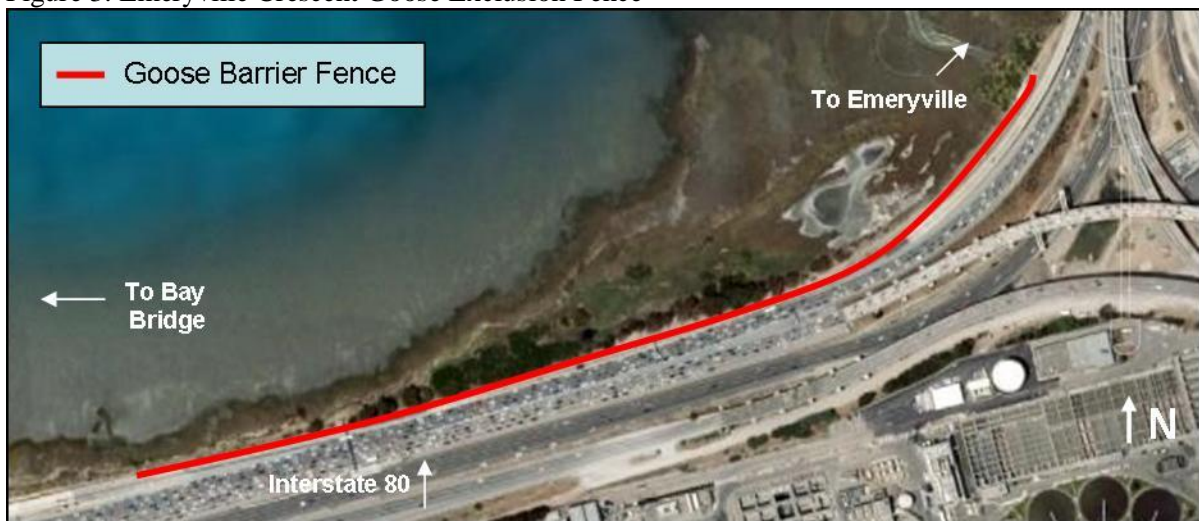
Two adult peregrine falcons were observed at the outset of the monitoring period. An adult male was perched on the north tower of Pier E3 of the existing bridge and an adult female was perched on the south tower of Pier E3. At 1034 hours, the male flew to the north and disappeared behind Pier E3. No further observations of the male peregrine were made during the monitoring period. The female remained perched on Pier E3 at the same location for the duration of the survey.

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

cc: Stefan Galvez, California Department of Transportation