

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 12, 2010

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 #391, Week of December 28, 2009 – January 1, 2010
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

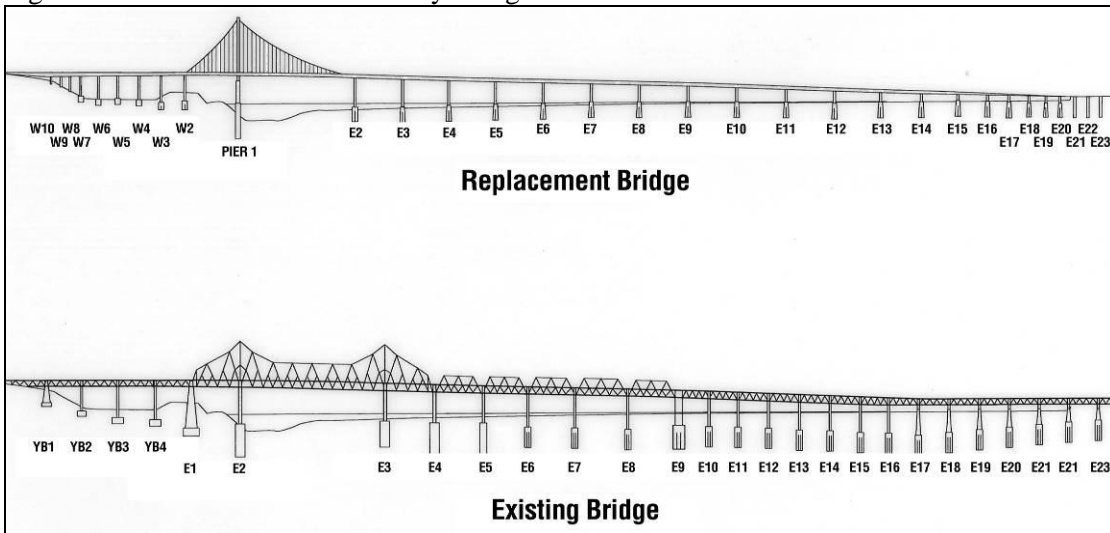


The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also 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 Marcus H. Bole & Associates (MHBA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of December 28, 2009 – January 1, 2010.

Bird Monitoring Activities

MHBA 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 construction sites and crew boat traffic on San Francisco Bay. Construction activities during the peregrine falcon monitoring included work on the temporary trusses, work on the new access trestle to T1, and

demolition of existing bridge portions no longer in use on Yerba Buena Island. Three workers were also observed climbing to the top of the north tower of Pier E2 of the existing bridge.

The weekly bird survey was conducted from 1030 to 1350 hours on December 28, 2009. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1040 to 1140 hours on December 28, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: The bird monitors recorded three observations of brown pelicans:

- At 1105 hours, one was resting on the base of T1;
- At 1145 hours, one was perched on the cable-crossing structure; and
- At 1226 hours, one was perched on the pier structure south of Pier E22 of the existing bridge.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were seen.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 67 double-crested cormorants were observed resting, flying, and/or foraging in the study area. No cormorants were seen on the constructed nest structures on the new bridge.

Western Gull: Approximately 21 western gulls were observed resting on structures and/or flying in the study area.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: Other bird species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (18), greater scaup (151), surf scoter (26), bufflehead (117), common goldeneye (4), ruddy duck (8), red-throated loon (1), common loon (4), horned grebe (8), eared grebe (1), western grebe (10), Clark's grebe (17), Brandt's cormorant (34), mew gull (18), California gull (10), glaucous-winged gull (1), and red-tailed hawk (1).

In addition, eight black-crowned night-herons were perched on the cypress tree on the south shore of Treasure Island (just north of the study area boundary).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

No peregrine falcons were observed.

Other Bird Species Observed: Other bird species observed during the peregrine monitoring were common loon, 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