

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 7, 2008

TO: Ivy Edmonds-Hess
Parsons Brinckerhoff

FROM: Steve Granholm, Task Leader for Bird Monitoring
LSA Associates

FOR: California Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Bird Monitoring Memo #311, Week of June 16-20, 2008
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

In order to improve the seismic safety of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB), the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is replacing the existing East Span with a new bridge immediately to the north. This is a multi-year effort that will involve a number of construction activities on land as well as in the Bay. Some of these activities could potentially affect federally endangered or threatened bird species and other bird species of special concern.

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 Caltrans monitor the double-crested cormorant colony and American peregrine falcon during the breeding season and prevent the birds from nesting on the existing bridge where potential impacts by construction activities could occur.

As required by the USFWS Biological Opinion and CDFG permit, monitoring efforts focused primarily on three endangered species: the California least tern, California brown pelican, and American peregrine falcon. The objective was to document any take of these species resulting from construction activities. In addition, monitoring was conducted to determine whether construction is having any adverse impacts to the breeding efforts of the double-crested cormorants and western gulls on the existing East Span. Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the *Revised Final Bird Monitoring and Management Plan* (Caltrans 2003). This plan incorporated the requirements of the USFWS, CDFG, and the FEIS, as well as those of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) permit, Special Condition F-6.

This memo summarizes the East Span construction bird monitoring activities conducted by Natural Resources Management (NRM) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of June 16-20, 2008.

Bird Monitoring Activities

NRM and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. Construction activities during the bird survey included various work at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound site, the Pier T1 construction site, and on Yerba Buena Island (YBI).

The bird survey was conducted from 0630 to 0930 hours on June 20.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: At 0910 hours, one least tern was observed flying over the water (to the southwest) at the southern edge of the Port of Oakland Outer Harbor.

California Brown Pelican: No brown pelicans were observed.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 340 double-crested cormorants were foraging, perched, or sitting on nests under the existing bridge. The greatest concentration of nests was between Piers E7 and E10.

Western Gull: Approximately 70 western gulls were flying, foraging, resting, or engaged in nesting activities in the study area. A pair and two chicks were perched on a piling near the eastern shore of the Port of Oakland Outer Harbor.

Other Observations of Birds and Marine Mammals: Other species observed during the survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were mallard (2), western grebe (1), Clark's grebe (13), western or Clark's grebe (27), Brandt's cormorant (114), great blue heron (1), snowy egret (2), black-crowned night-heron (5), Caspian tern (1), Forster's tern (1), pigeon guillemot (4), black phoebe (1), and song sparrow (4).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

Peregrine falcon monitoring has been discontinued for this nesting season. It will start up again in December 2008.

Conclusions

The monitors did not observe any indications that birds were disturbed due to the East Span construction activities.

cc: Monica Gan