

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 28, 2008

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 #316, Week of July 21 - 25, 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 LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of July 21 - 25, 2008.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat. Construction activities during the bird survey included various construction activities at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound, South-South Detour, and Self-Anchored Suspension. In addition, preparations were underway for pile-driving at the Pier T1 construction site.

The bird survey was conducted from 0930 to 1230 hours on July 25.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: At 1050 hours, two brown pelicans were observed on the pilings just southwest of Pier E2 on the existing bridge.

Peregrine Falcon: No peregrine falcons were observed.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately 410 double-crested cormorants were observed in the study area. Most were perched on the cable-crossing structure and the footing of adjacent Piers E9 and E10 of the existing bridge. About 10 were seen foraging in the bay. Activity in the nesting colony on the existing bridge is winding down and most of the young have fledged. Many of the cormorants observed on the cable-crossing structure and the footing of Piers E9 and E10 of existing bridge were young birds.

Western Gull: Approximately 40 western gulls, including juveniles, were observed. Many young birds still at nest sites were actively testing their wings and appear ready to fledge.

Other Observations of Birds and Marine Mammals: The other species observed during the bird survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were harbor seals (5), Canada goose (4), western grebe (4), Clark's grebe (4), Brandt's cormorant (20), pelagic cormorant (1), great blue heron (1), snowy egret (1), Heermann's gull (2), Caspian tern (1), Forster's tern (3), elegant tern (5), and pigeon guillemot (3).

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

Peregrine falcon monitoring has been concluded for this year's nesting season, because observations up to this time indicated that the East Span nesting territory was not occupied this season.

Conclusions

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

cc: Monica Gan