

The Beacon

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA

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CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORIC ENTRANCE GATE NEARS COMPLETION

As a memorial to former Park Manager Jim Boucher, the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association contracted Wellsona Iron & Engineering in Paso Robles to design and construct a replica of a historic light station entry gate. Originally built circa 1910, the gate stood until the 1950s when the access road was moved. The new gate will be dedicated in February, 2017.



Above: The original gate as seen during the early 20th century.



Left: Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron & Engineering, inspects one of the foundation brackets. The new gate structure is bigger and stronger than the original. Modern building and safety codes require minimum overhead clearance and strong anchor footings that far exceed the original gate.



Above: Dan and his crew lay out and assemble the overhead section of the entrance gate structure. The posts that carry the massive overhead beams and sign are custom milled 12 x 12 redwood nearly 16 feet tall.



Left: A light station volunteer helps install the 2 x 12 signs and 4 x 12 support blocks. There is a surprising amount of craftsmanship and detail work that goes into building the new entrance gate. It takes time, care and patience to execute joinery techniques and keep the big structure square.



The Beacon is a joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The PBLSA is a non-profit partner of the BLM and provides support for the restoration, conservation, interpretation, and stewardship of the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. © Copyright 2017



ENTRANCE GATE NEARS COMPLETION

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Above: *Dan Murphy finishes one of the fence sections for the new gate.* The original 1910 construction drawings include two 10 feet long matching fence sections that flank the gate and enhance the mass and look of the overall structure.



Above: *The gate gets a first coat of primer/sealer.* The gate itself is nearly 15 x 15 feet and made out of 6 x 6 redwood. Dan fabricated custom pivot assemblies so the gate will swing smoothly, easily and safely for another 50 years.

The gate will be dedicated in mid-February to honor former park manager Jim Boucher. We are grateful to our generous donors who helped make this project happen.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBCAM?

Since it was installed last year, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. Depending on the time of year, you may see elephant seals lounging on the beach, waves crashing on rocks, flowers in bloom, and beautiful sunsets. www.piedrasblancas.org/webcam

CRITTER CORNER

STELLER SEA LIONS AT POINT PIEDRAS BLANCAS

The Point Piedras Blancas area is now well known for the Northern elephant seal colony – which began in 1990 in a small cove at the Point and has since spread up and down the nearby coast. Other pinniped species (seals and sea lions) that can be regularly observed in the area are harbor seals and California sea lions. Another sea lion, the Steller — or northern — sea lion can be seen hauled out on nearby rocks (such as the Outer Islet and Piedras Blancas Rocks), but is a much less common marine mammal in the area than are the other mentioned species.

Steller sea lions (SSLs) resemble the more common California sea lions (CSLs), which can be seen on most days at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. With a little practice, the two species can be distinguished — especially if you see an adult or large sub-adult male SSL (the sex and age class you are most likely to observe near Piedras Blancas) next to an adult male CSL (see photo). The male SSL can attain a weight of up to 2,500 pounds — much larger than the CSL (up to about 900 lbs). Much of the male SSLs extra weight is accounted for in their massive chest, shoulder, and neck areas. While the CSL snout has been compared to that of a collie-like dog, the SSL face has been described as being bear-like. In addition, the adult male CSL has a pronounced bump (sagittal crest) on the top of its head; the SSL does not. SSLs also have a lighter color fur than do CSLs (yellow-brown vs. dark brown). Another difference (among many) are their vocalizations: the “barking” of CSLs that you are probably familiar with is much different from the “roaring” of the SSL bulls.

From records of sightings of Steller sea lions at Point Piedras Blancas over the last 25 years, your best chance of seeing one is from January through May. If you are in the area, make sure to look at the offshore rocks (binoculars are very helpful). If you are lucky, you might just see a truly impressive marine mammal — a Steller sea lion.

A large sub-adult male Steller sea lion (left of center), an adult male California sea lion (right of center), and numerous smaller California sea lions below, hauled out on a rock at Pt. Piedras Blancas. Photo credit: B. Hatfield





BLM UPDATE

Ryan Cooper, Park Manager

Happy New Year, everyone! Well, 2016 is behind us here at the Piedras Blancas Light Station and it has been a year of many accomplishments and new endeavors. We recently offered our first drive-in tour and multiple hike-in tours and that were very successful, a special open house tour for Jack's Helping Hands (a program for children with cancer and special needs) and an expanded summer tour schedule. Many projects were also accomplished around the light station. We built a new platform for the whale count team, resurfaced the walking trail and tended to acres of native vegetation: weeding out non-native plants and collecting native seeds for propagation. Most recently, the gift shop and tank house were given a fresh coat of paint.

As we look ahead, 2017 looks to be another productive year. Antennas will be installed onto the replica water tower. A replica entrance gate honoring former park manager Jim Boucher will be installed in February. Restoration on the Fog Signal Building will continue in hopes that the roof can be replaced before next winter. Our popular tours will continue to educate people about lighthouse history and marine life. And we will sprinkle in special tours throughout the year. We couldn't accomplish as much as we do without the unwavering support of our volunteers and financial support of our members. Thank you for making the light station a gem on the Central Coast.

For information on Piedras Blancas Light Station
www.piedrasblancas.org

FACELIFT FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS



From L to R: Brittany Klappert, Paige Tweedy, Jennifer Renier, Nick Staha

In December, we were happy to host a crew from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) while they worked on a number of projects. This hardworking group trimmed the walking trail, cut back the cypress tree wind break and re-painted both the gift shop and tank house. Scraping, sanding, pressure washing, and re-painting the two historic buildings was no easy feat, and something none of the crew had tackled before. They did a fantastic job in record time and finished just as a winter storm arrived. We are so grateful for their efforts to maintain the Piedras Blancas Light Station!



PBLSA UPDATE

Jim Harris, Chair

Welcome to our newest board member, Gary O'Neill



Gary was raised in California's Central Valley and attended Saint Mary's College in the Bay Area. After graduating in 1971, Gary joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to Liberia in West Africa where he worked as a rural agriculture volunteer for two years. He spent an additional three years there with a Quaker rural development program before coming home to get a second degree in production agriculture. Gary spent the next 35 years working in production agriculture in the Central Valley before retiring to the Central Coast two years ago. Gary is an active PBLS volunteer and he enjoys nature photography and is frequently seen around the light station with his camera in hand.

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association board members welcome your comments or questions.

Phone: 805-927-3719 or email: contact.pblsa@gmail.com
Board meetings are held in the conference room at Rabobank in Cambria at 6 PM on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

The public is welcome and encouraged to participate.

LIGHTHOUSE NEIGHBORS

Point San Luis Lighthouse

(58 miles south of PBLS)

Located in Avila Beach. For a complete listing of guided tours and to reserve a ride on the shuttle, visit: sanluislighthouse.com or call 805-540-5771

Point Sur Lightstation

(65 miles north of PBLS)

From November through March tours are offered at 10 AM on Saturdays and Sundays and at 1 PM on Wednesdays. During the summer there are additional days and times. For a complete listing of tours: pointsur.org or call 831-625-4419

Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLS)

Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1 PM - 4 PM. For more information: ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse

Looking for that perfect gift? Visit our online gift shop to purchase items unique to Piedras Blancas.

Free shipping too!

www.piedrasblancas.org/store

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION TOURS

Tours are offered year-round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through August 31, tours are offered daily except Wednesdays and Sundays. There are no tours on federal holidays. Tours last about 2 hours and include the historic Piedras Blancas lighthouse and support buildings along with a half mile interpretive trail that provides spectacular ocean views and opportunities to view wildlife. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 AM.

Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!

For information, email piedrasblancastours@gmail.com
or call 805-927-7361

Groups of 10 or more
please make advance
arrangements.

\$10 for adults, \$5 ages
6-17, no fee for children
5 and under.

Tours may be
cancelled on the day
of the tour due to
inclement weather.



Dress warmly and wear comfortable
walking shoes. Sorry, no pets!

PBLS Association
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All memberships include our quarterly newsletter. Your dues help with the maintenance and restoration of the Piedras Blancas Light Station.

- ___ \$50 Friend of the Lighthouse
(1 complimentary tour)
- ___ \$100 Acting Keeper
(2 complimentary tours)
- ___ \$250 Assistant Keeper
(4 complimentary tours)
- ___ \$500 Principal Keeper
(engraved brick)
- ___ \$1000 Superintendent of Lights
(engraved brick & private tour for up to 6)

***Help restore
and preserve
Piedras Blancas
Light Station
by joining
PBLSA***

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make check payable to PBLSA
You may also join online at piedrasblancas.org

Thank you for your support!