Moving Forward in the Age of COVID-19

As most of you are aware, we closed the light station in March to protect our staff, volunteers, and visitors from the spread of COVID-19. We have been working closely with our BLM leadership and paying close attention to state mandates and direction from San Luis Obispo County’s public health office to ensure that visits to the light station will not exacerbate the spread of the virus.

We are acting particularly cautiously now, as COVID-19 rates are rising again across the state.

The health and safety of our staff, interns, volunteers and visitors is our paramount concern. As we begin to think about reopening, many of the changes you will see will reflect how COVID-19 affects our community in the coming seasons.

The changes will hopefully be temporary, and we will continue to follow best management practices as we move forward.

Concrete Paths a Welcome Upgrade

While the light station is closed it has given our staff a lot of time to work on projects. The wooden walkways in front of the Coast Guard units have been deteriorating. Recognizing that, our interns Veronika, Mike and Christine took the initiative to create concrete paths to replace them. Without any prior experience they figured it out on their own (with some help from YouTube videos) and did a fantastic job. We are grateful to have hard working interns who are proactive and passionate about keeping the light station in ship shape.

Take a Peek at the Lighthouse Any Time

Since our live webcam was installed in 2016, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. You may see elephant seals on the beach or a beautiful moonrise.

Check us out: piedrasblancas.org/webcam

Shop Online and Support PBLS

Even though we are closed our online gift shop is always open! We offer custom ornaments, etched wine glasses, shot glasses, mugs, t-shirts, fleece jackets and vests just to name a few. An engraved brick installed at the light station makes a memorable gift, too! Prices include tax and shipping and all the proceeds stay here at the light station. You may also join PBLSA or renew your membership online.

Visit us at: piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop
To return to a place such as Piedras Blancas Light-
house after two years away without the faintest idea that
one would ever return is akin to bumping into an old love
lifetimes removed from the original tryst, it truly is the
sweetest of reveries.

Since working at the lighthouse in 2017, my partner
Christine and I have crossed the globe while working in
the craggy fjords of Norway with a skydiving club,
surfing the desolate and tempestuous desert beaches of
Northern Peru, and enjoying the warm waters between
the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn during the winter
swells. Interwoven through these adventures we were
also settling into the great blue ridge hills of the
Appalachian Mountains. While in Boone, NC, the heart
of the Appalachian high country, I attended graduate
school for Student Affairs & College Outdoor Programs
Administrations while Christine worked with Appalachian
State University’s college of education. From our quaint
off the grid mountain cabin we explored not only the
bucolic and ragged landscape of the greenest
of mountain sides but also the vast sandy stretches of
the Outer Banks, which are home to a few of the
most iconic North American lighthouses. After our two
wonderful years tucked away into the ancient mountain
landscape of the Carolinas we are so stoked to have the
opportunity to once again return to frothy shores of
Piedras Blancas Lighthouse.

If we aren’t busy trimming the trails or keeping the
station in top notch order you can be sure to find us just
north of the station surfing one of the best waves this
coast has to offer! To be a surfing lighthouse keeper is
all one needs to be! Kowabungha!

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**COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE**

“I brought this slaw to several lighthouse volunteer potlucks
and it has always been well received.” Carole Adams, PBLS
Volunteer

**Lighthouse Keepers’ Slaw**

1 head of cabbage, shredded
1 onion, sliced
3/4 cup sugar

Mix together:
1 tsp dry mustard
1 1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp celery seed
1 cup vinegar
Boil.

Add 1 cup vegetable oil and blend. Pour the hot mixture
over the cabbage, onion, sugar mixture. Chill 24 hours.

*Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver’s cookbook “Dinner at the
Lighthouse” available in our gift shop.*
WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTALLATION AND REPAIR OF THE FIRST ORDER FRESNEL LENS?

According to Jim Woodward (*The Lighthouse Consultant*), the district lampist staff was responsible for the installation and maintenance of any optic in their service area. There was more staff in the lamp shops beyond the chief lampist. There were junior lampists, learning the trade, and machinists. The lampists were responsible for everything related to the lens itself, while the machinists were responsible for everything related to the pedestal, rotating mechanism, and clockwork. The two trades worked together in the lamp shops, but their responsibilities did not overlap.

For the installation of the new lens at Piedras Blancas, the lampist staff would have installed the lens assembly after the machinist staff installed the pedestal and clockwork. Annual inspections of the lens were done by lampists. If there was an issue with the pedestal/clockwork, a machinist would be sent for to make repairs or adjustments.

During the annual visit, the lampists would perform all work necessary to keep the lens in factory new condition. That might entail no work beyond the thorough inspection, or it could mean on-site repair. On rare occasions, if a lens needed work that was too complicated to do onsite, it was noted and at a future date a replacement optic was brought to the site to be used while the station optic was being repaired. Those repairs might be done onsite or back at the depot lamp shop.

A related question is, who installed the lantern and the other ironwork in the lighthouse?

Installing the lantern and other ironwork would have been done by mechanics who were part of the construction crew. In the 1870s, a mechanic could build a building, steam locomotive, or a bridge. We call those folks engineers today, but back then they were called mechanics.

TRIVIA TIME

**How many steps are in the lighthouse?**
Currently there are 92 steps inside the lighthouse. If you add the outside stairs that is a total of 104 steps. According to architectural plans, prior to removal of the upper three floors, there were 114 steps from the ground floor of the lighthouse to the watch room. There would have been additional steps from the watch room to the lantern floor.

**How many bricks are in the lighthouse?**
Around 500,000 bricks.

**How long did it take to build the lighthouse?**
The work party arrived on April 17, 1874 and the light was first illuminated on Feb. 15, 1875 - about 10 months.

**Originally, how tall was the lighthouse?**
100 feet to the top of the ventilator ball of the lantern.

PBLS ASSOCIATION AWARDED GRANT

We are pleased to announce that the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association was one of 24 nonprofits awarded a grant from the United States Lighthouse Society in July. Since its inception, the U.S. Lighthouse Society lighthouse preservation grant program has awarded funds to many nonprofit lighthouse organizations across the nation, all designed to help restore or preserve the lights we all love. This year, in light of Coronavirus, grants were awarded to help preserve lighthouse organizations themselves with emergency relief grants similar to what the Federal government has done for U.S. citizens to help ease the financial stress on lighthouse preservation groups. The funds we receive will help offset the costs of signs, interpretive materials and personal protective equipment needed once we reopen to visitors.
Meet Abel and Toni Martinez

We started to volunteer at Piedras Blancas Light Station (PBLs) in 2002. We have been so fortunate to be on a terrific volunteer team that has made a huge difference at PBLs. Working with other volunteers has provided opportunities to meet new friends and learn skills from others who have awesome talents/skills. Our tour guide volunteer duties have made it possible to meet many happy and impressed visitors, especially the 4th grade students who will never forget their very special visit to the light station!

The work accomplished by the volunteer team has greatly contributed to providing continual responsible stewardship at the light station. We will never forget the inexhaustible working spirit and gratification when the volunteers took part in a variety of working groups, especially in an “ice plant pulling party”!

Toni was a special education teacher and Abel was a public health professional in health education up to retirement in 2001. We have 4 sons (1 deceased) and 5 grandchildren. Since 2002 we have kept busy as volunteers with the Cambria Food Bank, Cambria Historical Society Board, CAN driver to medical appointments, Thanksgiving Day delivery of meals to shut-in residents of Cambria/San Simeon, Cambria Dental Children’s Program, Special Olympics, Cambria Community Healthcare District, and deliver meals to low income/unemployed families during COVID-19. Since 2004 we have visited, stayed at, and have lighthouse keeper friends at various lighthouses in the USA, Ireland, Scotland, and Canada. Toni has crocheted afghans for a women’s shelter and Abel has done fundraising for health/human services organizations in connection with running marathons. We both enjoy gardening and maintaining a Monarch butterfly sanctuary in our yard at Mariposa Lighthouse in Cambria.

Interested in joining Abel and Toni and our other friendly volunteers? Drop us a line - we would love to meet you! Email our volunteer coordinator, Jodie Nelson: jrnelson@blm.gov

Join Our Monthly Board Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of Every Month

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets every 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 pm at Mechanics Bank in Cambria. The public is always welcome to come and listen, ask questions or voice concerns.

The board consists of people from varied backgrounds and education who live in different parts of the county. We are always interested in speaking with anyone who is interested in becoming a board member.

Please send us an email if you are interested or have questions: contact.pblsa@gmail.com

Meeting minutes are published on our website under the About Us page.

Lighthouse Neighbors

Point San Luis Lighthouse
(58 miles south of PBLs)
Located in Avila Beach. For a complete listing of guided tours and special events and to reserve a ride on the shuttle, visit: PointSanLuisLighthouse.org or call 805-540-5771

Point Sur Lightstation
(65 miles north of PBLs)
Summer Hours (April-September) Saturdays and Wednesdays 10 am and 2 pm, Sundays 10 am. Visit their website: PointSur.org or call 831-625-4419

Point Pinos Lighthouse
(90 miles north of PBLs)
Located in Pacific Grove. Open Saturdays 10 am - 4 pm and Thursdays through Mondays 1 pm - 4 pm. For more information: PointPinosLighthouse.org
**MEET THE NATIVES**

Coastal bush lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*) is indigenous to California and is widely distributed among coastal sage scrub and sand dunes. This evergreen has gray-green leaves and spikes of fragrant white and lavender flowers that bloom in spring and early summer. Typically they grow 3-5 feet tall, but can reach 7 feet (hence the alternative common name, tree lupine). Like many members of the bean family, it is an effective fixer of nitrogen in the soil. This plant is stunning and attracts butterflies and bees.
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 two 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 advanced 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!

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PBLS Association
P.O. Box 127
San Simeon, CA 93452-0127
805-927-3719
membership.pblsa@gmail.com

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)

Name: ____________________________________________
Address: _____________________________________________
City:___________________ State:_________ Zip:__________
Phone: ______________ Email:_________________________

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

Thank you for your support!