

The Beacon

**PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA
~PART OF THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT~**

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DINNER & LIBATIONS EVENT A SUCCESS!

On Saturday, October 1, the light station hosted guests for Dinner & Libations for the Station, a fundraiser organized by the PBLSA with the help of Harmony Cellars. It was an evening of beautiful weather with good wine, good food, and good music. Guests were able to walk the light station grounds, learn from our docents, or just sit and enjoy live music by Kenny Taylor.

Along with ticket sales, generous donations from local businesses and individuals for the silent auction helped raise over \$7,000 for the light station's restoration efforts. See the complete list of sponsors on page 4.

The event was a success in large part due to the generous donations of staff time and wine by Harmony Cellars, who organized the catering by Hungry Mother, as well as other logistics that made the evening such a success. Special thanks to Erin Martin of Harmony Cellars.

We hope to make this an annual event, and we hope you'll join us next year! For news on upcoming events at the light station, visit pedrasblancas.org/events.



Photos by Gary O'Neill.



The Beacon is a joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The PBLSA is a nonprofit 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.
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INTERN, VOLUNTEER, AND NOW BOARD MEMBER: VERONIKA KOCEN

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association is very pleased to announce the addition of Veronika Kocen to its Board of Directors.

Veronika joined the team at Piedras Blancas in June of 2019 as an American Conservation Experience (ACE) intern. Fresh out of college from Gonzaga University (Spokane, WA) where she had studied biology and environmental studies, Veronika was excited to be able to teach others about the natural wonders Piedras Blancas had to offer to the public. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, Veronika stayed on working at the lighthouse and was committed to keeping interest in the light station alive by installing wildlife trail cameras and posting to social media.

In October of 2020, Veronika left the light station to take a position at the US Geological Survey in Menlo Park, California. The Board of Directors commended Veronika for her services to Piedras Blancas. Everyone at the light station wished her well on her future endeavors . . . and welcomed her back with open arms whenever she showed up again on Saturdays to help with tours or spruce up the trail.

Veronika was nominated to be a member of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Board of Directors this fall and she became a member in October. From Veronika:

"I'm excited to have this opportunity to continue serving the light station in a new role. I never could have imagined this happening back when I started. I look forward to seeing Piedras Blancas Light Station being restored and protected for future generations to enjoy."

Welcome (back) Veronika!



Photo by Jay Kocen.

JOIN THE PBLSA BOARD MEETINGS ON THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association will be holding their November/December meeting on Wednesday, December 7, at 6 p.m. We are currently holding virtual Zoom meetings.

The public is always welcome to listen, ask questions, or voice concerns, so please email us if you would like to participate. Meeting minutes are published on the piedrasblancas.org website on the About Us page.

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

Please email if you are interested in the board or have questions concerning the Piedras Blancas Light Station: contact.pblsa@gmail.com.

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, visit:
PointSanLuisLighthouse.org
or call 805-540-5771.

Point Sur Light Station

(65 miles north of PBLs)
Visit their website: PointSur.org or call 831-625-4419 for the current tour schedule. No reservations; first come, first served.

Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLs)
Located in Pacific Grove. Open Saturdays and Sundays. Tours are outside on the lighthouse grounds; the interior of the lighthouse is closed. For more information, visit: PointPinosLighthouse.org.



AN UPDATE ON THE PIEDRAS BLANCAS FRESNEL LENS

The First Order Fresnel lens formerly atop the light station tower has been on display in Cambria for over 30 years. During this time, the enclosure housing the lens has deteriorated to the point there is concern about its structural integrity. In response, a stakeholder group was formed with representatives from the PBLSA, BLM, Coast Guard, Congressman Carbajal's office, SLO County, and the Pinedorado Lions Foundation. County Supervisor Bruce Gibson and his aide have facilitated formation of the group and discussion around the future of the lens.

Consensus among the stakeholders was that the lens needed to have a permanent home that would fully conform to all Coast Guard storage and display requirements. Stakeholders also recognized that the cost to provide a suitable setting would require a significant capital campaign, meaning several years of fundraising would be needed. Consequently, the group settled on a two-phase approach.

In the first phase, envisioned to last up to five years, the lens would remain in its present location while the current enclosure was repaired and improved to be a secure facility to display the lens. This initial period would also allow for the time necessary to canvas the public on the preferred location for long-term display of the lens and to mount a successful capital campaign to fund construction of a museum-quality setting that fully complies with Coast Guard requirements.

To better understand the current condition of the enclosure, the PBLSA commissioned Shoreline Engineering to conduct an inspection and assessment of the current enclosure in Cambria. The subsequent report from Shoreline Engineering identified options to strengthen the enclosure. An improvement would add UV sheeting over the glass panels to mitigate sun damage to the lens. After discussion, and pending final approval from the Coast Guard, the group chose the option to install steel cross braced trusses over select bays to reinforce the structure.

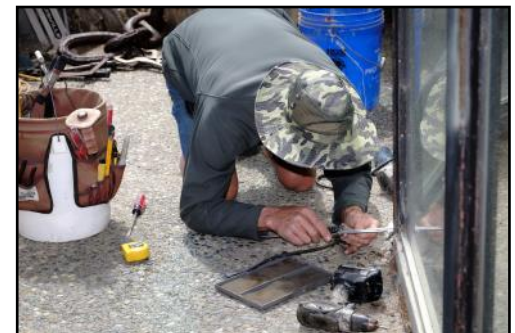
On September 20, 2022, representatives from the Coast Guard travelled to Cambria to meet with the stakeholder group. The Coast Guard's first interest was to secure a new lens loan agreement with a "borrower of record." The previous agreement with the Cambria Lions Club lapsed in 2021. During the meeting, the Pinedorado Lions Foundation expressed interest in becoming the new borrower of record, and the Coast Guard provided copies of their standard loan documents. After some negotiations, an agreement was reached between the Foundation's board and the Coast Guard to create addenda to the initial loan documents with the goal of arriving at terms acceptable to all.

On October 14, 2022, the larger stakeholder group met via Zoom to brief all on the agreed next steps. During this call, the stakeholder group also obtained approval from the Coast Guard to have Shoreline Engineering proceed with the final engineering evaluation suitable for building permit processing and the development of repair cost estimates.

The Coast Guard intends to provide their addenda by early November with the expectation the parties will sign a new loan agreement soon thereafter. Once Shoreline Engineering completes their assessment and costs are better known, fundraising efforts can begin in earnest to pay for the needed enclosure repairs and improvements.



Bruce Elster and Jeff Olson of Shoreline Engineering and Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron examine the enclosure of the Fresnel Lens in Cambria. Photos by David Cooper.



PBLSA MEMBER BENEFIT

Join the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and get 10% off all gift shop purchases!*

Simply enter coupon code: **MEMBER** in your shopping cart at shop.piedrasblancas.org, or let the gift shop volunteer know that you are a member the next time you visit the light station.

**Does not apply to donations, engraved bricks, memberships, or tour fees.*

To join PBLSA, complete and mail the form on the back of *The Beacon*, or join through our website at shop.piedrasblancas.org.

Questions about your membership status? Email us at membership.pblsa@gmail.com.

Thank you for supporting the light station!



VOLUNTEER SUMMIT

Volunteers and PBLS staff met on September 14 for a pancake breakfast prepared by site manager Ryan Cooper, as well as an opportunity to socialize and meet new volunteers. Ryan and PBLSA board chair David Cooper updated volunteers on lighthouse projects and upcoming events and answered questions. Interested in volunteering? Find out more on page 5.

GIFT SHOP UPDATES - ONLINE ORDERS OPEN!

This holiday season, consider the Piedras Blancas Light Station gift shop for your gifting needs! Not only do we have logo merchandise like pint glasses and t-shirts, we also have stuffed toys and books to teach kids about local wildlife. We also have nature-themed earrings and bookmarks.

And don't forget about the pathway of engraved bricks in front of the lighthouse. It's an opportunity to not only donate to a worthy cause but also honor someone important to you or remember someone who has passed.

Visit **shop.piedrasblancas.org** to support the light station through the gift shop, buying a brick, making a donation, or becoming a member.

GOLDEN HOUR PHOTO TOUR

On Saturday, November 5, amateur photographers had the opportunity to stay after-hours to capture the sunset off Piedras Blancas. PBLSA board member Gary O'Neill, also an avid photographer, was on hand to answer questions about photographing this magical spot. The weather at the light station is always unpredictable, and a dense morning fog made the outlook for the evening uncertain, but the afternoon cleared up and the evening was beautiful.

To find out about events like the Golden Hour Photo Tour, follow us on Facebook and Instagram [@piedrasblancaslightstation](https://www.instagram.com/piedrasblancaslightstation).



Photo by Eliane Rademacher

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR DINNER & LIBATIONS FOR THE STATION!

Artifacts Gallery
Bluebird Inn
Cambria Nursery & Florist
Cavalier Oceanfront Resort
Creative Concepts Unlimited
Firestone Walker Brewing Company
Harmony Cellars
Harvey's Honey Huts

Metta Pilates
Moonstone Beach Bar & Grill
Moonstone Landing
Robin's Restaurant
Sensorio Paso
STASH Local Goods
The Place, Cambria
The Spot, Cambria

Verde of Cambria
David Cooper
Ryan and Debbie Cooper
Lisa Duncan-Purcell
Veronika Kocen
Gary O'Neill

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT THE LIGHT STATION

Would you like to help preserve a historical landmark while enjoying beautiful coastal scenery? We currently have a need for volunteers in multiple roles. Are you interested in delving into the history of the light station and sharing that information with our visitors, or would you prefer to help in the gift shop? Some volunteers like working on restoration projects or helping with native plant rehabilitation, while others help out with Friday morning school tours. Whatever your interests, we'd be glad to have your help. If you'd like more information about volunteering at the light station, contact Jodie Nelson, our Outdoor Recreation Planner, at PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com.



Volunteers clear plants in front of the lighthouse to make room for seaside poppies.

SCIENCE OF THE PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION: BATS AND CONDORS

On Saturday, October 22, volunteers and community members were fortunate to learn about some of the wildlife in the Piedras Blancas area from the scientists who are studying it.

The first presentation was "California Condors in Central California", presented by Camden McMillan and Katie O'Connell of the Ventana Wildlife Society.

Camden and Katie are interns working with young condors (known as "rookies") that come from zoo breeding programs. Before release to the wild, the young condors are mentored by adults and trained to avoid power poles. They continue to be monitored after release to ensure their health and learn more about their range and behaviors.

Ventana was able to share encouraging news about the recovery of the California Condor population, from a

global low of 27 (all in captivity) in 1987 to a total population of 537 in 2021, 334 of which are wild. Ongoing threats to the condors include lead shot used to kill game animals, which are then eaten by the condors, resulting in lead poisoning.

The second presentation, "Bats of the California Coast", was given by USGS biologist Bethany Schulze.

Bethany described the eating habits, lifespan, and communication and echolocation calls of a variety of species. Bats are also responsible for pollinating and spreading seeds, making them an important part of a healthy ecosystem. Threats to bats include habitat loss, diseases such as White-nose Syndrome, and wind energy.

Since 2021, USGS has maintained a monitoring station at Piedras Blancas, among other sites, to find out which bat species live on this area of the coast and which might be impacted by planned off-shore wind farms. The monitoring station is outfitted with an ultrasonic microphone to pick up unique bat calls.

Some of the eight species of bats observed at Piedras Blancas include: Townsend's big-eared bat, big brown bat, hoary bat, and Mexican free-tailed bat.



VISIT THE LIGHT STATION ANY TIME, DAY OR NIGHT . . .

. . . with our live webcam, courtesy of Surflife. Enjoy a view of the light station grounds, the beaches to the north and south, and the waves crashing on the rocks offshore. Look for elephant seals on the beach and pelicans and seagulls perched on the rocks. Whether it's a foggy morning or a moonlit night, check us out:

piedrasblancas.org/webcam



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. Make your reservations online through our website, piedrasblancas.org. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 a.m.

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
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 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)
- ___ Donation \$ _____

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to PBLSA,
or join online at shop.piedrasblancas.org.

Thank you for your support!



Find us on Facebook
and Instagram:
PiedrasBlancasLightStation



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