

The Beacon

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

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JOIN US AT FOUR HIKE IN OPEN HOUSE DATES THIS SUMMER

Enjoy the scenery on an easy hike to the Piedras Blancas Light Station, where you can learn about the light station's history and local ecology.

On July 5, July 19, August 2, or August 16, pack a picnic lunch and enjoy wandering the light-house grounds between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Docents and staff will be on hand to answer questions, and the gift shop will be open.



Photo by Carole Adams.

Start your hike at the elephant seal viewing area parking lot 1.5 miles south of the light station or the parking lot at the vista point 1 mile north of the light station. Including the half-mile trail around the light station, the round-trip hike is 3 miles from the north and 4 miles from the south.

Entry is free, but the suggested donation of \$5 per person helps with the restoration and maintenance of the light station.

No pets, no smoking, no bicycles, and no drones are allowed on the trail or at the light station. Please stay on the trail.

For more details on parking and the trail, visit piedrasblancas.org/events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, July 5

Hike In Open House

Wednesday, July 19

Hike In Open House

Wednesday, August 2

Hike In Open House

Wednesday, August 16

Hike In Open House

Saturday, October 7

Dinner & Libations for the Station
Fundraiser

More information coming soon!

Find out about upcoming events:
piedrasblancas.org/events

DO YOU FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Keep up with Piedras Blancas Light Station online by following us on Facebook and Instagram. Follow [@piedrasblancaslightstation](https://www.facebook.com/PiedrasBlancasLightStation)



<https://www.facebook.com/PiedrasBlancasLightStation>

<https://www.instagram.com/piedrasblancaslightstation>



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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BLM UPDATES

New Coastal National Monument Manager

The Bureau of Land Management appointed a new manager of the California Coastal National Monument, which includes Piedras Blancas Light Station. The light station became part of the monument in 2017, due in part to the advocacy efforts of the PBLSA and other local organizations.

New manager Leisyka Parrot has extensive history working for BLM as a fire lookout, interpretive specialist, and assistant field manager. "I feel extremely fortunate to get to be one of the many stewards of this incredible slice of Pacific coastline. I am looking forward to working with coastal tribal governments, local communities, coastal agency partners and NGOs on a variety of issues facing coastal California," said Leisyka. "We will continue to work together to keep these public lands, that are enjoyed by millions of Californians, and are a destination for visitors from around the world, healthy and accessible for generations to come."

Outstanding Natural Area 15-Year Anniversary

Named an Outstanding Natural Area on May 8, 2008, Piedras Blancas Light Station is one of only three Outstanding Natural Areas designated by Congress. (Seven others have been named by BLM.) Outstanding Natural Areas are intended to preserve sites with unique scenic, scientific, and educational value.

The Congressional Designation emphasizes the significance of the historic structures and coastal marine and wildlife habitats of Piedras Blancas, as well as the importance of the area to local Chumash and Salinan tribes. Also critical are the partnerships between BLM and state and local organizations dedicated to the preservation of the light station and its surroundings. The management plan of the light station continues efforts to preserve and restore historic



Leisyka Parrot, new manager of the California Coastal National Monument, takes in the view from the top of the Piedras Blancas lighthouse.

buildings and to continue interpreting the natural and cultural resources for public education.

The twenty acres of the Piedras Blancas Light Station composed the original Outstanding Natural Area, but the scope was expanded in 2011 and again in 2013 to include adjoining California State Parks land. The resulting 476-acre Outstanding Natural Area includes additional important wildlife habitats of dune fields, riparian wetlands, and estuaries.

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

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. (except for November and December). 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.



LOCAL FOURTH-GRADE CLASSES TOUR THE LIGHT STATION

Visitors to the light station who grew up in San Luis Obispo County often mention how much they enjoyed their trip to the light station as fourth graders. BLM staff make an effort to offer a two-part lesson on the light station to all area schools, from Cambria to Los Osos to Paso Robles.

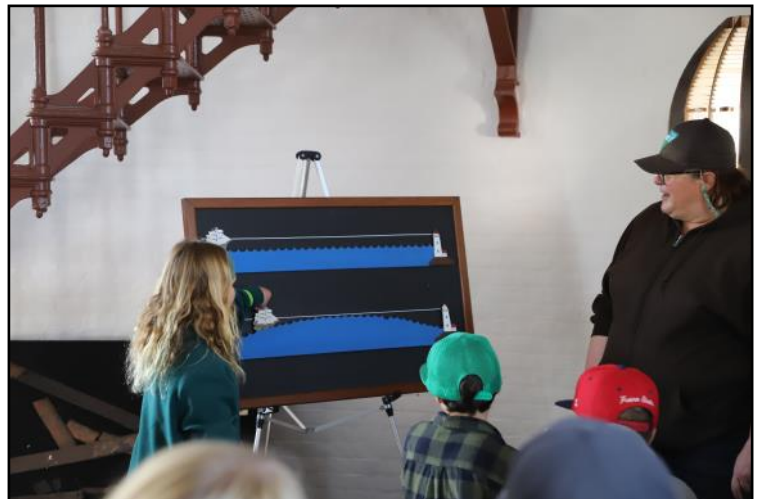
BLM staff and volunteers first visit each school to give an overview of the light station and the purpose of lighthouses with fun activities for the students. A week or so later, each class buses out to the light station for a 90-minute on-site lesson about life at the light station, how lighthouses work, and native plants and animals.

Schools that visited the light station this school year were: Baywood Elementary from Los Osos, Cambria Elementary, Cayucos Elementary, Del Mar Elementary from Morro Bay, Monarch Grove Elementary from Los Osos, Vineyard Elementary from Templeton, and Winifred Pifer Elementary from Paso Robles.

Transportation costs are paid by the PBLSA.



Volunteer guide Sue talks to local students about the role lighthouses played in the settlement of California.



Outdoor Recreation Planner Jodie Nelson looks on as a student explores how the curve of the earth affects a lighthouse's visibility.



Volunteer guide Gary talks to students about the native wildlife around the light station.



Volunteer guide Ken assists students trying out a clothes wringer as a little taste of 19th-century light station life.



Light Station Manager Ryan Cooper talks to local students about marine mammals.

DID YOU MISS AN ISSUE?

Check out the archive of *The Beacon* on our website at pedrasblancas.org/newsletter. We have digital versions of the quarterly newsletter going back to 2015.

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.

THREATENED SPECIES AT THE LIGHT STATION: CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROGS AND COMPACT COBWEBBY THISTLES

The California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) is a threatened species found primarily on the California coast. The light station is fortunate enough to have a small population of frogs breeding in the pond near the trail. Both tadpoles and adults have been observed. The standing water and vegetation surrounding the pond provide the ideal sheltered habitat, as the red-legged frog is not adapted for excessive heat and is most active at night. The population of red-legged frogs in California was depleted in the 19th and 20th centuries because they were harvested for food, and their population continues to decline due to habitat loss and predation by invasive species such as the American bullfrog.



Red-legged frog adult and tadpole photos by Gary O'Neill.



A perennial species exclusive to California, the compact cobwebby thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *compactum*) is one of the native plants that has repopulated the landscape of the light station after volunteers removed hundreds of tons of non-native ice plant. The photo above shows the thistle in various stages of producing flowers in shades of dark pink and purple. Now at the end of June, many of the blooms have been replaced by seedheads filled with the delicate threads that give the plant its name and allow seeds to be easily spread by the wind. The compact cobwebby thistle is threatened by habitat loss due to development.

THE ONLINE GIFT SHOP IS ALWAYS OPEN!

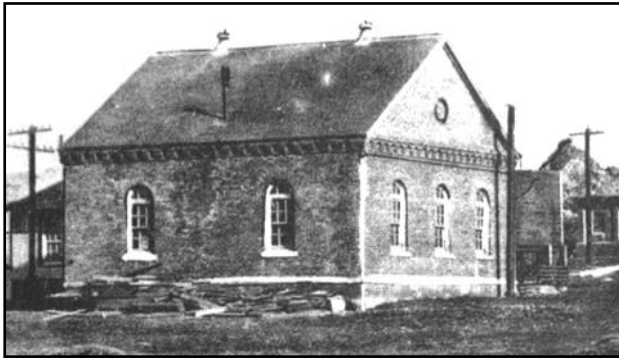
Visit shop.piedrasblancas.org to support the light station through purchasing merchandise, buying an engraved brick for the path near the lighthouse, making a donation, or becoming a member.



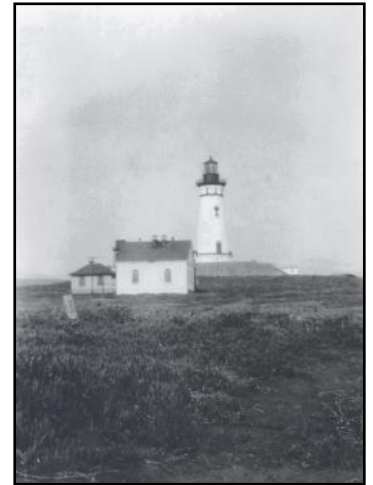
FOG SIGNAL BUILDING: PHOTOS OLD AND NEW

The fog signal building was built in 1905 to house the engines, compressors, and controls that operated the first whistle fog signal and the subsequent siren, diaphone, and diaphragm signals that warned ships away from the rocky coast in foggy weather. The fog signal building is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Restoration of the fog signal building began in 2010 with the removal of the white lead-based paint. The windows were repaired and replaced, stabilizing beams were installed along the interior walls, and cracks in the brick were sealed. The main phase of restoration was completed in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the final installation of interior lighting, which was completed in 2022.



Fog signal building with 10-inch whistle in 1910 (above).



Fog signal in 1932, shown from the west (right).

Fog signal building circa 1938, with Type G diaphone signal (below).



Early restoration (above) and completed lighting (below).



The fog signal building today.

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION TOURS

Tours are offered year-round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through September 1, 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 tour 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!



Piedras Blancas Light Station Assn.
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San Simeon, CA 93452-0127
805-927-3719
membership.pblsa@gmail.com

All memberships include *The Beacon*, our quarterly newsletter.

___ \$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 people)

___ Donation \$ _____

**HELP RESTORE
AND PRESERVE
THE PIEDRAS
BLANCAS LIGHT
STATION BY
JOINING PBLSA**

Name: _____

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Email: _____

Please make checks payable to PBLSA, or join online at
shop.piedrasblancas.org to pay by credit card.

Thank you for your support!



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