

The Beacon

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

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JAN - MAR 2024

HAPPY 149TH BIRTHDAY, PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHTHOUSE!

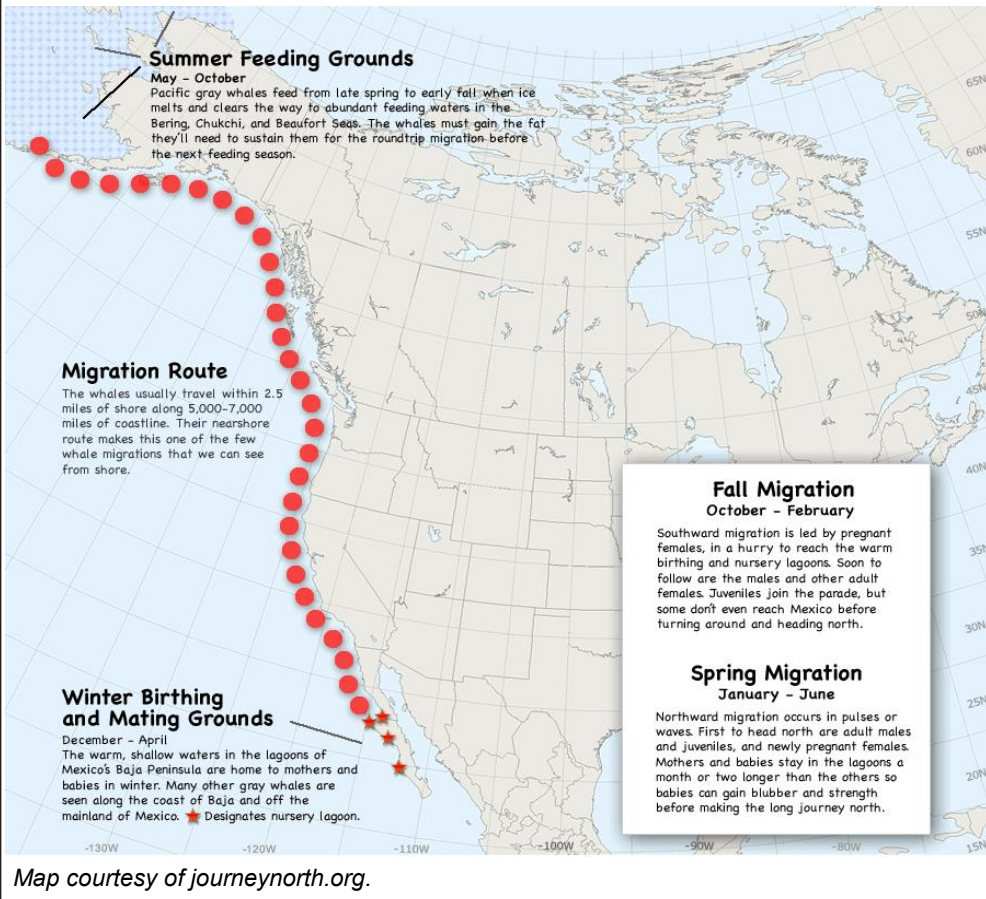
The light at Piedras Blancas was first lit on February 15, 1875. Construction was started in April 1874.

Volunteers, staff, and visitors celebrated with cake and a special photo on February 15.



Photo by Gary O'Neill.

WATCH FOR GRAY WHALES THIS SPRING



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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VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY IN JANUARY

The light station hosted a volunteer appreciation party on January 26, where staff and volunteers spent a beautiful evening socializing and enjoying a potluck meal. Light Station Manager Ryan Cooper updated volunteers on events and projects happening at the light station, as well as praising everyone for their hard work.

In 2023, volunteers dedicated more than 3,000 hours to the light station! Without volunteers, the public tours, school tours, and special events simply could not happen. And the light station is certainly more beautiful due to the efforts of volunteers who maintain the trail and remove invasive plants, as well as clean, repair, and do other odd jobs. Thank you all so much!



Photo by David Cooper.



Photo by David Cooper.



Photo by Veronika Kocen.

DID YOU MISS AN ISSUE?

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

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 Association: contact.pblsa@gmail.com.

THE ONLINE GIFT SHOP IS ALWAYS OPEN!

Visit shop.piedrasblancas.org to support the light station by donating, becoming a member, buying an engraved brick, or purchasing merchandise.

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 Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. For hours and more information, visit:
PointPinosLighthouse.org.



TOWER RESTORATION PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY

The exploratory phase of the lighthouse tower rehabilitation has begun! In order to stabilize the tower, PBLSA first contracted with Shoreline Engineering to prepare a report on the best ways to counteract the historic earthquake damage that resulted in the removal of the top three floors of the lighthouse in 1949, as well as more recent rust-jacking that has damaged the brickwork.

In order to provide further information, geotesting was conducted by Yeh & Associates, starting on February 22 with the digging of test pits next to the tower to ascertain the depth of the foundation. When the tower was built in 1874, the foundation construction deviated from the plans due to the hardness of the rock the lighthouse builders encountered.



BLM archaeologists check for artifacts in the dirt dug up next to the tower foundation. Photo by Gary O'Neill.

The second phase of geotesting was seismic testing using ground-penetrating radar on February 27. The results of this testing will determine what will be necessary to protect the lighthouse from further earthquake damage.



Digging a trench next to the lighthouse foundation. Photo by Gary O'Neill.

The next phase, estimated to begin this spring, will be the replacement of the ironwork on one of the lower windows. Removing the iron will prevent further damage caused by rust and allow for closer examination of the brickwork. The window will be replaced with a concrete

replica that will look identical to the ironwork but will not contribute to the deterioration of the lighthouse.

Funding for the exploratory phase and engineering reports was provided by the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association.



Working with ground penetration sensors for seismic testing. Photo by Gary O'Neill.

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



VOLUNTEER GROUPS CONTRIBUTE TO THE LIGHT STATION

In addition to our regular group of dedicated volunteers, the light station has been fortunate to have the assistance of teams from the American Conservation Experience (ACE), AmeriCorps, and the Sierra Club this winter.

ACE work crews spent nearly a month working at the light station,



An ACE crew member pressure washes the side of the tank house to prepare it for painting. Photo by Lauren Eustace.



The AmeriCorps team lays new flooring in Unit B. Photo by Auden Fremstad.

beginning in November and returning in December. In November, they trimmed the entire trail, removed carpet from Coast Guard Unit B, and began prepping the gift shop for painting. In December, they returned to continue painting the gift shop and the tank house, as well as painting in the lighthouse rotunda. In March, another ACE work crew focused on trail work and clearing weeds throughout the historic district near the gift shop.

AmeriCorps members were busy in December with cleaning and organizing the garages, trimming the Monterey Cypress windbreak, and leveling portions of the trail. They returned in January to install laminate flooring in the BLM offices in Coast Guard Unit B, finish painting the tank house, and build new stairs for the tank house. They also spent time weeding and helping with special events.

The Sierra Club also joined us in December for a tour of the light station and an afternoon of pulling ice plant and trail maintenance.

Thank you to everyone for your hard work preserving the historic buildings and natural landscape of Piedras Blancas! We couldn't do it without you!



Members of the Sierra Club remove invasive ice plant. Photo by Michelle Stewart.

PROGRESS ON THE REPAIR OF THE LENS ENCLOSURE

The original Fresnel lens was removed from the Piedras Blancas Light Station after an earthquake damaged the tower in 1948. The lens is currently housed in a thirty-year-old enclosure on Main Street in Cambria. The enclosure has degraded over time, and the roof has been damaged by recent storms.

A community stakeholder group met in late 2022 to discuss the future of the Fresnel lens and decided that repair of the current enclosure was the first step. The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association commissioned an inspection of the structure, and the report by Shoreline Engineering suggested options to strengthen the enclosure and further protect the lens, including UV sheeting over the glass panels, as well as the addition of cross-braces over some of the panels.



Photos by David Cooper.



The original estimate for the repair work was approximately \$112,000. However, further damage was found as work progressed, including rust and corrosion at the base of the columns. The additional work required has resulted in unforeseen costs, which exceed fundraising efforts to date. Expenses include the additional repair work, a thorough cleaning of the lens, yearly inspection fees, and potential improvements, such as temperature monitoring.

The PBLSA has started a GoFundMe campaign to raise the funds to finish the lens enclosure repair and provide for future maintenance.



Photo by Scot Addis.



Learn more about the Fresnel lens and other aspects of light station history at piedrasblancas.org.

**DONATE TO THE GoFUNDME
TO HELP PROTECT THE LENS!**

<https://gofund.me/7e47292d>



Piedras Blancas Light Station Association has started a GoFundMe to raise money to complete the repair of the lens enclosure and to ensure the continued structural integrity and safety of the enclosure through yearly inspections and future improvements.



**Thank you to the
Sponsors of the Lens
Enclosure Repair Fund!**

Cambria Tourism Board
San Simeon Tourism Alliance
Cambria Community Council
Pinedorado Lions Foundation
Piedras Blancas Light Station Assn.
and Generous Local Donors

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.
P.O. Box 127
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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

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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and Instagram:
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