

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

April 27, 2022

Present: David Cooper (Chair), Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), Jim Harris, Gary O'Neill, Jodie Nelson (BLM), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

Absent: John Brass, John Hodge (BLM), Ryan Cooper (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. There was a brief discussion about holding meetings in person again. Most board members favor continuing Zoom meetings.

Agenda approved by consensus.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the March 23, 2022, meeting was approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. There was a small profit recorded in March, as well as for the year-to-date. There continues to be an overall market downturn for investments.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. Cressant has included a new chart in the gift shop report showing the profit after factoring in cost of goods and taxes. This will help track how recent price increases affect the overall profit margin. March sales were the highest on record.
4. BLM Update (Jodie Nelson) – See Appendix 4. Mortar testing on the tower cannot proceed without a full review and BLM approval.

The CCCs have done a lot of work around the light station grounds, including expanding the trail for better elephant seal viewing. A brick has been purchased for the path to thank them for their service.

Projects to be funded in the next fiscal year, including repainting the lighthouse before the 150th anniversary in 2025 and installing a Greenflush bathroom in the lower parking lot, have been submitted to the BLM field office for approval and will then be sent on to the state office.

Parking lot plans are being modified to protect an archaeological site in the area.

Interviews for a seasonal park ranger are ongoing.

Jodie completed the National Conservation Lands Manager's Report for 2021. She will email the report to the board and make sure it and prior reports are available in the library.

The State Leadership Team visited earlier today; they were given a partial tour, a NOAA presentation, and an overview of PBLSA by David. A field office team will also get a tour on Thursday.

Ryan will be back in the office on Monday, May 2. Jodie will be starting a temporary detail near the end of May that will be a good learning opportunity and a good chance to raise the profile of the light station.

Jodie reported that online reviews are generally very positive regarding the new tour format, which encourages more families with children to visit. Signage to fill information gaps left by the current tour format is included in next year's budget request.

David asked about the viewership of the video shown in the Watch Room. Gary reported that approximately 25-30% of visitors watch the video, but those who have watched have positive feedback. He also reported that 80% of visitors like the tour format and the opportunities it creates to spend their time where they are most interested, whether that is nature-viewing or asking more in-depth questions of volunteers.

Gary asked if there will be more volunteers recruited for summer. It is hoped that a new seasonal ranger can start at the end of May to help with tours; Jodie also has leads on potential volunteers. Jodie would like to improve volunteer training with the feedback of current volunteers. It is unlikely that interns will be hired in time for summer due to contract delays. Possible solutions to a volunteer shortage include introductions with larger groups and fewer volunteers, as well as adjusting the number of reservations if necessary. Jodie emphasized that she does not want to burn out the regular volunteers; BLM staff will manage any scheduling gaps. Sharon suggested contacting new Cambria homeowners and even long-term vacationers, since the new tour format has a less steep learning curve. Jodie has also explored online training, which the Friends of the Elephant Seals and the Discovery Center have adopted.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. Jim reported that Bruce has heard from Earth Systems, who have some concerns about the reviewing process. Jim suggested using the time until BLM approves the Shoreline window replacement proposal to begin design work for the top three floors of the tower. Discussion followed regarding the potential costs and how changes to the Shoreline proposal might impact the design work. Jim explained that the top three floors would be built on the ground, then installed; Bruce addressed how this would be impacted by different methods of stabilizing the tower in his report.

There was further discussion on the total costs of PBLSA projects proposed or in progress, as well as a lack of sufficient board members to manage all projects. Sharon observed that the top of the tower is a more compelling target for fundraising than some of the other components of the tower restoration.

Jim suggested the board contract with the Architectural Resources Group for preliminary design concepts to be provided within a specified time frame and with a budget not-to-exceed a predetermined amount. They would work alongside Shoreline. Jim will compose a draft RFP for the board to review and have more details for the next board meeting.

Jodie stated that if all proposed projects can be combined in one letter to SHPO from the BLM archaeologists, then it would shorten the overall timeframe on getting a response. The timeframe for that response is estimated at six months to a year.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. Connected Energy would like to present a white paper at an in-person board meeting.

7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 7. Jim emphasized the importance of using Instrumentl to search for grants. Jodie reported that the light station did not receive funding from the Great American Outdoors Act application; the money was awarded to Punta Gorda Lighthouse and other projects.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – See Appendix 8. David reported that the committee is working on creating a rough draft of a case statement for the project.

Old Business:

1. Project Priorities Revisited (Harry Thorpe) – Harry emphasized the need to update project priorities. He would like to hold an in-person meeting at the light station. Board members not able to attend in person could attend via Zoom.
2. Fresnel Lens Update – The lens needs public attention and public meetings to move forward. Redistricting is complicating attempts to encourage Congressman Carbajal and Congressman Panetta to support a public meeting. David will continue working on the issue.

New Business: None

Discussion Items:

Sharon investigated the San Luis Obispo Library presentations as a possible opportunity to raise the visibility of the light station and determined it would not be a good venue.

Jodie suggested that contracting with a professional to post on social media would be a good way to increase visibility. The Board would like to revisit the communication plan developed by Jesse Pluim.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on May 10, 2022.

Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 4/27/22 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

March 23, 2022

Present: David Cooper (Chair), Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), John Brass, Jim Harris, John Hodge (BLM), Jodie Nelson (BLM), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

Absent: Gary O'Neill, Ryan Cooper (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The tabled motion from last meeting will be addressed in Old Business rather than in the Tower Report. Agenda approved by consensus with this change.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the February 23, 2022, meeting was approved by consensus. David recommended board members and BLM staff refer to Section 5 of the minutes for a good summary of the approval and funding process related to the Shoreline proposal.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. There was a small loss recorded for February. A \$1,000 targeted donation for the lens was received and deposited in the Pacific Premier Targeted Donation Fund. A spreadsheet has been created to track targeted donations and expenses charged against them. There were no BLM expenses for the month. The investment market continues in a downward trend.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. Gift shop sales in February were the highest on record. Cressant is continuing to raise prices in the gift shop to compensate for increased vendor prices. She will watch sales trends to see if overall sales numbers drop as a result. Prices in the gift shop remain comparable or lower than other gift shops in the area. Jodie has observed a change in the demographic of visitors toward people with more disposable income who would be willing to pay increased prices.
4. BLM Update (Jodie Nelson) – See Appendix 4. Jodie had a recent on-site meeting with a BLM archaeologist, an environmental planner, and an engineer to discuss the parking lot, flagpole relocation, and other projects. The restroom project may be complicated by archeological concerns. Jodie is trying to facilitate a Zoom meeting where Bruce Elster of Shoreline and BLM engineers can discuss the tower window proposal.

A BLM seasonal park ranger position has been advertised for the light station; this position would work a maximum of six months to assist during the busy season, though there is the possibility of extending it. John also reported on a permanent park ranger position for the light station that has been approved for funding but not yet advertised. An intern position for the light station may be advertised through a new contract in June or July.

The Eroica event scheduled for Sunday, May 1, is still pending approval.

Jodie has been in contact with new staff at the BLM grants office. There is a possibility of extending the co-op agreement, with the limitation that the only expenditures can be for projects approved before the end of the agreement.

Jodie is planning two events for volunteers, with the possibility of opening them to partner agencies and organizations. One is on plant uses by native tribes in the Sierras.

Harry and Jodie will meet soon to discuss the electrical work to be completed in the Fog Signal Building. Steps to be completed include getting requirements for vendors to bid on, the board approving the funds to spend, and approval for the co-op reimbursement from the grants office. It's estimated that the work will cost \$25-30k and the hope is to have the work completed this summer.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. Bruce is working on answering questions from BLM engineers. The mortar testing will be done before the window replacement. Bruce expects to get a proposal from Earth Systems regarding the geotechnical scans for the tower foundation.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. Connected Energy is waiting for an in-person meeting of the board to present their white paper.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 7. Jim encouraged the board to use Instrumentl to search for grants. Discussion followed.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No recent meetings.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – No update since the last board meeting. Members are working on creating a case statement. The next meeting will be April 18.

Old Business:

1. Tabled motion to approve Shoreline proposal of January 19, 2022 (David Cooper) – David sent questions to BLM regarding the process of using BLM funds; it is necessary to wait until the new grants office personnel are more familiar with the job in order to get answers to detailed questions. David recommended holding off on voting on the funding request; it will take six months to complete the engineering review, which may cause a change in the proposal and budget. As a result, the proposal may need to be requested with the next co-op funding agreement. If the motion is left on the table to expire, it can be re-introduced later with more detailed budget figures.

Jim asked if the mortar testing can be done independent of BLM and SHPO approval. It would provide better information for the rest of the proposal and cost \$20,000 for three weeks of testing. This could be performed while waiting for BLM approval of the overall proposal. John Hodge didn't know if anything could be done without review. Jim will send Jodie an email detailing the question and she will ask the BLM archaeologist. Harry reminded the board that similar mortar testing was done on the Fog Signal Building with verbal agreement from BLM engineering.

Jim rescinded the tabled motion with no objections. Motion off the table. David clarified that this does not indicate the board's favor or disfavor of the project; it is moving forward through other avenues.

2. Project Priorities Revisited (Harry Thorpe)
3. Fresnel Lens Update – Jodie reported there is no update from BLM, the Coast Guard, or the offices of Congressmen Carbajal and Panetta. David will contact the congressmen's offices on behalf of the board.

New Business:

1. Reporting board member volunteer hours to BLM – Because grants rely on in-kind volunteer dollars, Jodie would like to have more information from the board on time spent on light station work other than board meetings. Cressant will remind the board with the agenda draft email that total volunteer hours are due with reports. No detail is necessary, just total hours.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by David Cooper (Chair) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on April 21, 2022.

Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 4/27/22 – Harry Thorpe

TREASURER'S REPORT for March 2022

1. OPERATIONS INCOME: Last Month: \$6,336.46 YTD: \$14,756.76
PROFIT: Last Month: \$787.12 YTD: \$543.16

TARGETED DONATION FUND BALANCE: \$13,660.03

BLM SUPPORT EXPENSE: Last Month: \$1,058.09 YTD: \$1,440.68
BALANCES: P.P. Bank: \$999.00 ASAP: \$18,465.18

2. INVESTMENT BALANCE – FIDELITY INVESTMENTS

<i>Month</i>	<i>Beg Bal</i>	<i>Market Chg</i>	<i>Div/Int</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>W/D</i>	<i>Ending Bal</i>
Mar 2022	677,296.03	3,731.70	650.83	--	--	681,678.56
Feb 2022	686,777.31	<10,158.60>	677.32	--	--	677,296.03
Jan 2022	704,380.86	<18,259.77>	656.22	--	--	686,777.31

3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions for Jan/Feb. Posted adjustments.
- Corrected Coop bank balance/funds available. Re-classified deposit.
- Replaced office computer display.
- Reviewed gift shop purchase orders for best selling items.

Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.
Treasurer

Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 4/27/22 – Cressant Swarts

Prices have been increased on some items, with more to follow, due to increasing vendor costs. It is too soon to tell if these price increases will negatively impact overall sales.

March Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$4,401.34
Website sales	\$9
Total	\$4,410.34

March Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold	\$2,570.61
Profit	\$1,839.73
Percentage	41.7%

NET SALES COMPARISONS

Shaded month indicates lower sales than that same month last year. Figures include website as well as on-site gift shop sales starting in 2021. Excludes donations, memberships, and engraved bricks.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2016	1,798	2,609	2,830	1,988	2,142	2,586	4,861	3,410	2,716	2,647	1,930	2,103
2017	2,196	1,461	2,678	3,909	2,864	3,350	4,666	3,701	2,218	3,022	2,793	3,491
2018	3,077	3,094	3,104	3,316	3,133	3,707	6,225	4,157	3,383	2,552	1,597	1,730
2019	1,015	1,605	2,565	3,350	3,641	4,665	6,804	4,722	2,070	3,656	2,717	3,719
2020	2,202	2,764	1,653	215	164	189	524	244	136	56	220	376
2021	108	1,291	2,198	3,723	4,276	5,363	8,469	7,588	4,238	5,383	3,474	2,265
2022	2,636	3,290	4,410									

Government shutdown affected Dec 2018 and *COVID-19 affected 2020/2021 beginning on March 19, 2020.

Yearly Comparisons

	Jan - Jun	TOTAL
2016	\$13,953	\$31,620
2017	\$16,458	\$36,349
2018	\$19,431	\$39,075
2019	\$16,841	\$40,529
2020	\$7,187	\$8,743
2021	\$16,959	\$48,376
2022		

Appendix 4: BLM Update 4/27/22 – Jodie Nelson

- CCC's at the light station cleaned FSB, spread wood chips behind CG buildings, trimmed trail, and expanded trail for better elephant seal viewing. Return again this Friday, 4/29
- Lighthouse projects entered into BLM's Budget Proposal System:
 - 1) repainting the lighthouse
 - 2) building a Greenflush bathroom in the lower parking lot
- Projects compete with other projects across the state for funding. No guarantees of funding this round, but projects can be entered into successive years of BPS.
- Parking lot improvement – working with our archaeologist and engineer to finalize the design and materials. No significant changes but will be a safer design that accommodates more vehicles and has an improved curve radius for emergency and other large vehicles. Depending on SHPO response, hope is to begin work this fall.
- Seasonal Ranger position – interviews this week. Hope to make a decision and job offer next week. Start date unknown at this time, but hopefully May/June in time for summer tour schedule.
- School field presentations and field trips status: only one more field trip for this school year – Baywood Elementary this Friday, 4/29
- 2021 National Conservation Lands Manager's Report for Piedras Blancas has been formally released
- State Leadership Team visit to the light station 4/27, 1-4pm
- MOMAC (Master Operations and Maintenance Consolidation) Team tour of the light station Thurs, 4/28, after public tours
- Eroica Cycling Event this Sunday, 5/1
- Ryan returns Mon, 5/2
- Jodie leaves for Public Affairs Office detail 5/23

Tour Numbers

Month	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
October	637	605	516	500	506	441	535	22	552
November	622	503	474	357	523	433	334	56	375
December	404	464	426	273	829	251	518	0	208
January	661	731	623	266	608	0	715	0	348
February	573	570	572	284	780	318	578	108	404
March	696	754	560	502	662	784	185	160	466
April	663	616	581	666	684	790	0	399	
May	432	629	352	572	362	555	0	446	
June	658	916	521	787	732	698	0	643	
July	1178	990	850	1125	1169	1085	0	972	
August	985	809	693	836	1001	819	0	834	
September	601	481	442	437	591	374	0	547	
Total	8110	8068	6610	6605	8447	6548	2865	4166	2,353

*partial

Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 4/27/22 – Jim Harris

The proposal response from Earth Systems Pacific, Geotechnical Engineers, to Shoreline Engineering has not been submitted, and they are not being responsive to communication from Bruce on its status. Bruce will continue to inquire on their status and request a response of a proposal. In addition, the timeline for the issues related to archeological and SHPO oversight of the tower work that the BLM is addressing appears to be on the order of six months from being completed. Also, the use of the Co-Op Agreement for funding the tower work remains open. Therefore, the status of the Shoreline proposal for the three tasks in preparation of the tower restoration remain open.

Assuming it will be at least six months before the status is resolved, it is proposed that the PBLSA initiate a project to begin the design for restoring the top three levels of the tower. This project would fund work performed by Shoreline Engineering using the San Francisco firm Architectural Resources Group as an architectural consultant for initiating the restoration design of the top three levels. The concept is to fix the amount of money for this preliminary work and define the time period for the contract. Existing historical plans of the top three levels will be provided, Shoreline would work with ARG on the attachment of the top three levels as a separate component, and preliminary design concepts for the top three levels using composite materials would be the components of this project. Along with the design effort, the requirements would be defined for the construction of the top three levels. The period of effort would be less than six months and the not-to-exceed cost can be determined by the PBLSA Board. The project would be awarded to Shoreline, who would have ARG as a subcontractor, thus keeping the lines of responsibility transparent. It is suggested that the PBLSA Board discuss this concept and provide direction.

Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 4/27/22 – Jim Harris

The status of this project remains the same as last time: the under-grounding of the PG&E electrical supply lines project remains on hold. It is proposed that Connected Energy present their white paper and give a presentation to the Board as soon as the Board is meeting in person again, hopefully in the next few months. Their white paper is a proposed design of a sustainable option to allow electric power for the light station to be provided with or without grid input using a microgrid system with solar and motor generator input and battery storage.

Appendix 7: Capital Campaign/Grants Report 4/27/22 – Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe

With the planned tower work in the near future and initiation of the effort for restoration of the two Victorian structures, it is recommended that the PBLSA use Instrument I to identify potential grant opportunities to support the work for the tower and the restoration of the Victorians (including their possible use as the future home for the Fresnel Lens).

Appendix 8: Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report 4/27/22 – David Cooper

The Keepers' Cottages Work Group (David, Harry, Jim, and Cressant) met on 4/18/2022. We reviewed drafts of three sections of the case statement we are working on, including a description of PBLSA and why we are uniquely positioned and qualified to pursue the project; a description and scope of project; and a budget and funding plan. Next steps involve refining the draft and then meeting with an architectural consultant for suggestions and advice about moving forward.