

# The Beacon

## Piedras Blancas Light Station Outstanding Natural Area

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January-March 2015

### Piedras Blancas Light Station management history



Above: Lorin V. Thorndyke and his two sons, L.V. Jr. and Emory. Thorndyke was the second Principal Keeper at Piedras Blancas and the longest serving. He held the position for 27 years, from August 19, 1879 until August 22, 1906.



Above: Norman Francis became Principal Keeper in 1934. He made the transition from U.S. Lighthouse Service to U.S. Coast Guard and remained until 1947. He is seen in the photo above at the Los Angeles harbor light, prior to being assigned to Piedras Blancas.

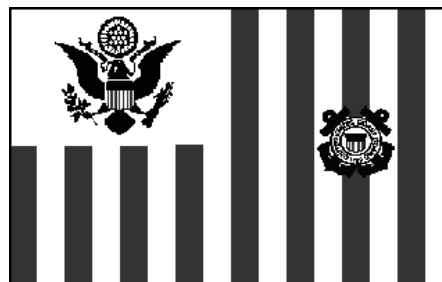


Above: John Bogacki, first manager under the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), wearing lighthouse period attire at the first public tour given by the BLM on June 28, 2003. Bogacki served as Park Manager until 2006.

**A common question is, "Who manages the light station?"** The Piedras Blancas Light Station has always been managed by the federal government, although the specific agency changed over the years. The lighthouse was constructed under the Lighthouse Establishment, which morphed into the U.S. Lighthouse Service. In 1939 the United States Coast Guard assumed management of all lighthouses, light stations, and light ships. In 2001 the U.S. Coast Guard transferred the helm to the Bureau of Land Management. One of the first things the BLM did was go to the public to find out what the people wanted to see happen at Piedras Blancas Light Station. The replies fell into three categories: restoration, structured public assess, and continuation of site specific research. Preservation, restoration, protection, and accurate interpretation are fundamental principles of management at the light station.



U.S. Lighthouse Service pennant was used on light service vessels, not at light stations.



1939 U.S. Coast Guard flag



BLM flag being raised BLM Honor Guard at the Transfer Ceremony, 2002



A joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association is a non-profit partner for the Bureau of Land Management. It provides support for the restoration, conservation, interpretation, and stewardship of the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. © Copyright 2015





# BLM update

## Loss of our leader

We are saddened to report the death of Jim Boucher, Piedras Blancas Light Station Park Manager. Jim came on board in 2006 and accomplished so much it is staggering. The next 2 pages of this issue of the Beacon are devoted to the progress that occurred under Jim's leadership.

Jim Boucher's past work experience included Muir Woods, Yosemite National Park, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. He was a hard working, dedicated federal employee, passionate about getting things done. There are no words to express our sorrow. Our heartfelt sympathies go to his family, and to all who knew and loved him. Memorial donations may be made to the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association, to be used for a special memorial project.



*Jim Boucher, Piedras Blancas Light Station Park Manager, 2006-2014. His duties included cleaning and maintaining the current marine beacon.*



*Young people were important to Jim. One of his proudest achievements was the Educational Outreach Program. Above he is seen admiring an activity booklet prepared by Grover Heights Pennies for Piedras kids in 2010.*



*Jim worked hard getting the job done, whatever it was. Above he is on the left, helping install part of the interpretive trail.*



*At right, Jim is explaining the interpretive plan outline to guides and assistants. Jim was responsible for expansion of public tours, giving more people the opportunity to visit the light station.*



**Ryan Cooper, BLM employee** from the Carrizo Plain is serving as acting manager until the position is permanently filled. Ryan is an Outdoor Recreation Planner and former high school teacher.

Ryan has jumped in and is participating in many ways. In addition to administrative activities, you will see him helping with tours.



**Former Piedras Blancas Light Station manager, John Bogacki**, has returned as advisor during the transition to a new manager. John retired in 2006 but has remained a strong follower of light station happenings. The above photo was taken in 2014 during a tour John gave to a group of lighthouse fans.

John Bogacki was the first BLM manager at Piedras Blancas and was responsible for writing the management plan. Under his leadership, the BLM forged strong partnerships within the community. John also created the very successful volunteer program at the light station. We owe a lot to John Bogacki. John began the *Beacon* as a volunteer newsletter in 2003.

**For information on Piedras Blancas Light Station**  
[www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org)  
or [www.piedrasblancas.gov](http://www.piedrasblancas.gov)

# Piedras Blancas Light Station Accomplishments 2006-2014



*Old storage building restored in 2008, now used as gift shop and visitor center.*



*Removal of lead based paint and repainting of lighthouse, 2012.*



*Fog signal building restoration in progress 2010-2014, partially complete.*



*Laundry building replicated in 2008, now houses main electrical panels.*



*Blacksmith shop/watch room replicated in 2010, now used for interpretive purposes.*



*Tank house restored in 2008; holds water tank.*



*Replication of elevated water tower, 2013 for public safety communication*



*Removal of old office and garage in 2010..*



*Fuel oil house restored in 2010, now used for interpretive purposes.*



*Cottage storage shed replicated in 2012, for public safety communication equipment*



*Removal of non-native vegetation and native plant restoration 2002-2010.*

## More accomplishments, 2006-2014



Above: Mr. Weitzen's 4th grade class from Del Mar Elementary School, Morro Bay.

An educational outreach program began in 2010. It is curriculum centered and activity based, focusing on topics that relate to the light station. By the end of the current school year, over 2,400 students will have participated in the Piedras Blancas field trips.

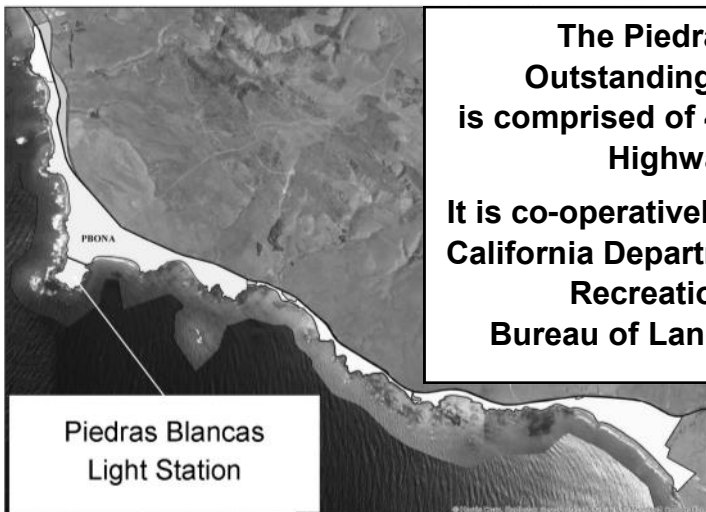
Promoting stewardship in young people for cultural and natural resources. is the goal of the Educational Outreach Program.



Above: Abel Martinez portraying a keeper in the lighthouse.

Public tours were expanded to three days a week year round and 6 days a week during the summer. Over 45,000 visitors have enjoyed Piedras Blancas Light Station tours since 2008.

Living history tours are offered several times a year. In February we celebrate the first lighting of the first order lens, which occurred in 1875. During the summer we observe National Lighthouse Day with a "Peek at the Past" tour. Twilight Tours are offered during the fall. A whale watching/sunset viewing tour is offered in March.



**The Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area is comprised of 444 acres west of Highway One.**

**It is co-operatively managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Bureau of Land Management.**

In 2008, the 19 acre Piedras Blancas Light Station was designated as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) within the Bureau of Land Management Natural Landscape Conservation System. The Outstanding Natural Area was expanded in 2011 and again in 2013 to include adjoining California State Park land. It now totals over 400 acres and includes the entire Piedras Blancas elephant seal rookery.

The Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation was established by the United States Congress primarily to protect unique scenic, scientific, educational, and recreational values. Recreation activities center on fostering education and interpretation of the ONA's unique resources, both cultural and natural.

## Future projects may include the following

Replication of the keepers dwelling



Replication of the gate and reservation fencing



Replication of the Keeper's cottage



Replication of barn/ four car garage



Restoration of the lighthouse and replication of the upper three levels is being studied.





# PBLSA update

by David Cooper, Chair



Completion of phase one of lighthouse restoration was a major milestone of Jim Boucher's time as manager at Piedras Blancas Light Station. In 2012 the old lead based paint was removed and the truncated lighthouse was repainted. Replicating the upper three levels may be an option in the future.

At its recent meeting, the PBLSA Board of Directors acknowledged with great sadness the passing of PBLSA Park Manager Jim Boucher on November 5, 2014. The Board established The Jim Boucher Memorial Fund in honor of Boucher's service to the Piedras Blancas Light Station. We pledged to collaborate with association members, the Bureau of Land Management, volunteers, and community and non-profit partners in a memorial tribute to Boucher, our brother in stewardship to the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area.. Those wishing to contribute to the fund can send tax-deductible donations payable to "PBLSA Jim Boucher Memorial Fund" to:

Harry Thorpe  
Piedras Blancas Light Station Association  
Jim Boucher Memorial Fund  
P.O. Box 127  
San Simeon, CA 93452

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association board members welcome your comments or questions. 805-927-3719 or membership.pblsa@gmail.com

Board meetings are held at the Rabobank in Cambria, at 6:00 PM on the fourth Wednesday of every month.. The public is welcome.

A festive holiday volunteer appreciation party was held on December 13th. We send a special THANK YOU for the much appreciated appetizer food trays donated by the Cookie Crock Market and the following restaurants: JJ's Pizza, Linn's, Manta Rey, Cavalier, and the San Simeon Bar & Grill.

## Join us on the path to restoration!

Your purchase of a personalized, engraved brick to be placed in the path around the lighthouse will help restore the light station.

Maximum of three lines. Each line can have up to 16 characters, including spaces and punctuation. All letters are capitalized. Not all three lines have to be used. You may purchase multiple bricks. Minimum donation \$100.

Line 1																	
Line 2																	
Line 3																	

I am paying by check (Made out to PBLSA)  MasterCard  or Visa

MC or Visa number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form to:  
Piedras Blancas Light Station Association.  
P.O. Box 127,  
San Simeon, CA 93452  
or order online:  
[www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org)  
To order by phone, call  
805-927-3719.

**Thank you!**



### Upcoming special tours

#### February 14th, 2015 Birthday party tour

The 140th birthday of the lighthouse will be celebrated during the regular public tour Saturday morning, February 14. Living history enactors will bring the 1890 era to life. We expect a big turnout so arrive at the former Piedras Blancas Motel between 9:30-9:45. See tour information on back of *Beacon*.

#### March 14, 2015, Whale watch/sunset viewing tour

This is an opportunity to experience the light station at sunset and watch for northbound gray whales. \$15/adults, Details given when reservations are made. 805-924-1897

### Lighthouse neighbors

**Point Sur Lightstation** For a complete listing of tours, go to [www.pointsur.org](http://www.pointsur.org) or call 831-625-4419. November through March tours are offered at 10:00 am on Saturdays and Sundays and at 1:00 pm on Wednesdays.

**Point Pinos Lighthouse** Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1:00-4:00. [www.ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse](http://www.ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse).

**Point San Luis Lighthouse** For a complete listing of tours and access, go to [www.sanluislighthouse.org](http://www.sanluislighthouse.org) or call 805-540-5771 to reserve a ride on the trolley.

# Piedras Blancas Light Station Tours

Tours are offered year round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through August 31, tours are offered 6 days a week, Mondays through Saturdays. There are no tours on federal holidays. Tours last about 2 hours and include the historic Piedras Blancas lighthouse and support buildings and 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 a.m.

### ***Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!***

Groups of ten or more please make advance arrangements.  
\$10 for adults, \$5 ages 6-17, no fee for children 5 and under.

For information on tours email [PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com](mailto:PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com) or call 805-927-7361.



Dress warmly and wear comfortable walking shoes.

No pets!

Tours may be cancelled on the day of the tour due to inclement weather.

PBLS Association  
P.O. Box 127  
San Simeon, CA 93452-0127  
805-927-3719  
[membership.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto:membership.pblsa@gmail.com)



All memberships include the quarterly newsletter and knowledge you are helping with restoration and maintenance 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)

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

Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Please make check payable to PBLSA.  
You may also join online at [www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org).

***Thank you for your support!***

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association  
P.O. Box 127  
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