

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION ASSOCIATION
15950 CABRILLO HIGHWAY
PO BOX 127
SAN SIMEON, CA 93452-0127



October 6, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski,

I am writing in support of Senator Boxer's bill, *S. 1971, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act* that is scheduled for a hearing before your Subcommittee on Public Lands on Thursday, October 8, 2015.

I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association (PBLSA). I chaired the Board when the PBLSA, along with another local nonprofit—Friends of the Elephant Seal (FES)—co-sponsored a citizen's initiative in August 2014 to elevate the status of the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area to a National Monument. PBLSA supports the conservation, restoration and education efforts of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the 20 acre historic light station. We also continue to actively support the Piedras Blancas California Coastal National Monument Initiative.

The Coastal National Monument Expansion Act will greatly enhance management and resources to restore the Piedras Blancas Light Station to a period in history, the early 1900s, when the site played a significant role in the protection of central California maritime activities. In addition, the Act will bolster efforts to preserve and protect the natural, historical and cultural resources of the site while providing more opportunities for compatible scientific, cultural, social and interpretive activities for the benefit of present and future generations.

Four of the structures on the 20 acre federally owned and managed site—the lighthouse (1875), fog signal building (1906), fuel/oil house (1907) and a storage building (1876)—are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The site supports habitat for over 60 native plant species. The increased abundance of native plant life has given rise to greater terrestrial animal diversity, including bobcats, raccoons, deer, skunks, rabbits, grey fox, coyotes, weasels, squirrels and a variety of birds and reptiles. Habitat includes endangered species such as the snowy plover and red-legged frog.

The near-shore marine environment is even more dynamic—rich in species diversity and minimally impacted by humans. Kelp is abundant in the surrounding water, supporting a healthy population of southern sea otters.

Point Piedras Blancas is situated near the cultural interface of two Native American groups: the Northern Chumash and the Salinan. Archeological evidence indicates both groups spent time in the area during the past 3,300 years.

The California Coastal Monument Expansion Act will help ensure that the Piedras Blancas Light Station will continue to flourish as a site where visitors and researchers can explore the cultural history of the area, the abundant marine and terrestrial life, and the botanical habitat that form a true sanctuary, a jewel in the crown of California's Central Coast.

We are pleased that *S. 1971* includes provisions to continue joint management of adjacent federal and state land to ensure the highest level of protection for all of Piedras Blancas' natural and cultural treasures.

We ask for your leadership and support to pass *S. 1971, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act*.

Sincerely,

David D. Cooper, Ph.D.

Cc: Senator Cantwell