



News Release

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Contact: Roy Stearns

Phone No.: (916) 654-7538

Email Address: (916) 799-1036

Added Contacts: Shane Wolfe, U.S. Dept. of Interior (202) 208-6416
Lynn Cullivan, National Park Service (415) 561-7006
Elizabeth Goldstein, California State Parks Foundation (415) 258-9975
Anne Sharman, Peninsula Open Space Trust (650) 854-7696

Pigeon Point Lighthouse

Historic Lighthouse Transferred to California State Parks

Public-Private Partners Worked to Acquire, Now Work to Restore

PIGEON POINT -- In a ceremony today at Pigeon Point, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton signed documents to transfer the Pigeon Point Light Station from the U.S. Coast Guard to California State Parks. Established 134 years ago, the historic light station is 115 feet tall, one of the tallest on the Pacific Coast.

In addition to Secretary Norton, the participants in the ceremony included State Parks' Director Ruth Coleman, GSA Regional Administrator Peter Stamison, U.S. Coast Guard Admiral Jody Brekenridge, Peninsula Open Space Trust President Audrey Rust, California State Parks Foundation President Elizabeth Goldstein, and U.S. Lighthouse Society President Wayne Wheeler.

"I am happy to announce that the Pigeon Point lighthouse will go to the California Department of Parks and Recreation, which will administer it as a state historic park in cooperation with its foundation," said Interior Secretary Norton. "A little over a year ago, we transferred Point Sur light station to California parks as well. The state and private partners will make outstanding guardians of both of these lighthouses. These partnerships are the heart of what will protect lighthouses from coast to coast."

Located near Pescadero, along Highway 1 in San Mateo County, the Pigeon Point Light Station was established in 1871, and first lit in 1872. California State Parks, in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), a leading private, public benefit land trust, made an application to acquire the lighthouse in 2002. In March 2004, the National Park Service selected California State Parks to own and manage the lighthouse and supervise the forthcoming restoration efforts.

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“For more than 100 years, this light station and others kept the rocky shores of California safe for mariners,” said Mike Chrisman, California Secretary for Resources. “Countless numbers of people owe their lives to these structures and so it is fitting and proper that the State of California accepts this lighthouse and preserves the legacy of this historic and picturesque landmark.”

California State Parks was selected to receive the light station under the National Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. Under this Act, the U.S. Department of Interior is charged with recommending the transfer of historic lighthouses (at no cost) to federal, state or local government agencies, or nonprofit organizations. The law directs the Secretary of the Interior to work with the U.S. Coast Guard, the General Services Administration and the National Park Service to choose the best stewards for long-term preservation.

“Our intent is to share the history of this magnificent historical landmark with the people who visit our parks,” said Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks. “Our Park System has 47 State Historic Parks and so our people are uniquely qualified to preserve and tell the story of this California landmark. We willingly accept this light station into our family of historic parks and we look forward to restoration efforts that will reopen it to the public.”

In working as the State Parks’ partner in seeking to acquire the lighthouse, Peninsula Open Space Trust President Audrey Rust said, “At POST, we viewed Pigeon Point Lighthouse as the focal point of a vast network of protected lands. After raising the funds to purchase the land surrounding the lighthouse, deconstructing the unsightly motel planned for the property, and transferring it to the state, we are pleased that the lighthouse and the surrounding lands will be viewed from the sea as they were 100 years ago.”

Pigeon Point Light Station was closed to the public in December 2001 after two, large pieces of brick and metal fell from the 115-foot tower. Inspections have shown that after many years without upkeep, the structure has deteriorated and extensive repairs are needed. However, through a public/private partnership with California State Parks, the California State Parks Foundation is spearheading a \$5 million fundraising campaign to return the structure to a condition that is safe for public use.

“We look forward to being an integral part of the restoration of this magnificent historic lighthouse,” said Elizabeth Goldstein, President, California State Parks Foundation. “Upon its restoration, the light station will continue to provide educational programs and tours to visitors for many years to come.”

This transaction is more of a transfer of ownership than a new acquisition, because State Parks has operated the Pigeon Point Light Station for the past twenty years under a lease from the U.S. Coast Guard and intends to continue that operation within existing resources. For the restoration effort, as noted above, the funding will come from private donations.

Under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, about 300 lighthouses are to be transferred, because GPS, Global Positioning Satellite technology, has rendered them obsolete. Pigeon Point is the second light station to be transferred to California State Parks, the Point Sur Light Station having been transferred in April 2004 by Secretary Norton.

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