

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Point Cabrillo Light Station State Park Whale Festival Set for Two March Weekends

MENDOCINO, Calif. — The Point Cabrillo Light Station was established in 1909 on a point of land extending westward into the ocean. This location was selected for the Lighthouse by the US Lighthouse Service so that the light would be most visible to shipping on the hazardous coast of Mendocino. This same attribute makes Point Cabrillo a preeminent location from which to watch the annual migration of the Gray whales from the lagoons of the Baja Peninsula in Mexico to their summer feeding grounds in the Artic Ocean.

A spectacular opportunity for family fun awaits visitors during Whale Festival 2006 at the Point Cabrillo Light Station in Mendocino, March 4 and 5, and March 18 and 19, 2006, from 10 am to 4 pm each day. In addition to a grandstand view of the annual Gray whale migration, a saltwater aquarium, and marine science education, Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association (PCLK) volunteer docents will highlight Light Station history and local culture with visitor presentations at the Lighthouse, and other locations around the preserve.

A period museum showing how Lightkeepers and their families lived in the 1930's will be open in the restored East Lightkeeper's Residence. At the entrance to the Preserve, the Farmhouse Visitor Center, built on the footprint of one of the original homes of Pine Grove village, features an exhibit about the native Pomo people, and the settlers that displaced them. Pine Grove was a lumber and agricultural community, and one of the earliest European settlements on the coast.

Weather permitting, Docents will also lead walks to nearby Frolic Cove and relate the story of the Boston Owned Clipper Brig "Frolic", wrecked off the cove in July 1850 bound from China to San Francisco with a valuable cargo of Chinese merchandise for the Gold Rush miners and their families.

Restoration of the Head Keeper's Residence has just been completed and it will open as a Bed and Breakfast operated by PCLK as a major fund raising source for future operations in mid year. Tours of the residence will be offered to visitors during the Whale Festival Weekends.

"The history of the area's early residents, and the stories of the Lightkeepers who

followed are rich territory for exploration,” explained Jim Kimbrell, executive director of PCLK, “and great care has been taken to assemble historically accurate furnishings and artifacts for the new exhibits.”

Other Festival highlights include: The Marine Mammal Center of Sausalito exhibits and rescue demonstration, a guided bird walk, and presentations on Lighthouse history, ocean safety and whales. Games and art activities for children include a life-size gray whale jigsaw puzzle, chalk drawing, face painting, fish printing, and story telling. The US Coast Guard and USCG Auxiliary who have a long association with Point Cabrillo and maintain the beautifully restored Fresnel lens in the Lighthouse will have exhibits and demonstrations throughout the event. Hot dogs, soda, sweet treats, and hot drinks will be available for sale. The lighthouse gift shop will also be open with original artwork, informative books, and unique gifts.

ABOUT GRAY WHALES

Every spring, the California Gray whales journey with their newborn calves from the protected lagoons of western Baja to their ancestral feeding grounds in the cold waters of the Bering Sea. The whales migrating past Point Cabrillo belong to the Eastern Pacific Gray Whale population of roughly 18,000 to 23,000 individuals. These figures vary year to year, but represent a strong recovery of the population since attempts to ban hunting of the Grays were initiated by international treaty in 1937. The Eastern Pacific Grey whales pass by Point Cabrillo twice, on their southward journey between the months of November and February, and again going north between February and May. Since they don't migrate simultaneously, not all the whales make it all the way to Baja. Some linger off shore and observations suggest that these are primarily the younger males. Newly pregnant females lead the northward migration, followed by males, and the last to leave Baja are usually females with babies.

DIRECTIONS TO THE LIGHT STATION

The Point Cabrillo Light Station & Preserve is two miles north of Mendocino and six miles south of Fort Bragg. Take the Point Cabrillo Drive exit from Hwy 1 and follow the signs. Festival activities are an easy half-mile walk from the parking area. Handicapped parking is available. A \$3 per vehicle donation will be requested to support the light station's educational programs. Bring warm, windproof clothing. We have binoculars to share.

For a schedule of presentations and additional information, please visit www.pointcabrillo.org, or call the Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce at 800 726-2780 or 707 961-6300.

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