



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

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Catalina Island Conservancy Announced \$250,000 Gift for Airport in the Sky from Aviation Legend Clay Lacy

Private Jet Operator supports runway repair project

LONG BEACH, Calif – The Catalina Island Conservancy today announced that aviation legend Clay Lacy has donated \$250,000 toward Catalina's Airport in the Sky, ACE Clearwater Airfield's runway repair project. Airport in the Sky (KAVX) closed to private aircraft Dec. 10, 2018 – May 3, 2019 for critical runway repairs completed in a unique partnership between the Conservancy and the Department of Defense, U.S. Marines and U.S. Navy.

Once the airport reopened, Lacy wasted no time in flying back into the airport with which he has a longstanding history. The entrepreneur, airline captain, military test pilot, air race champion, aviation record-setter and aerial cinematographer has accumulated more hours flying jets than anyone on earth. He has logged 50,000 flight hours in more than 300 aircraft types. Many of those hours come from trips to Catalina Island. Lacy began his aviation career at age 19 and flew DC-3s to Catalina for United Airlines from 1952-1992.

“This year’s Conservancy Ball was the first time I’d ever taken a boat over to Catalina - it got me there, but I prefer being in the air,” said Lacy. “I’ve flown into KAVX on Catalina Island hundreds of times throughout my career. The runway repairs made such a difference in the landing experience at Airport in the Sky, and am very proud to support this important project.”

The donation helped fund materials, transportation and other costs incurred by the Conservancy, a nonprofit, to replace the runway’s aging asphalt surface. Because of the condition of the runway, the airport the Conservancy owns and operates was at risk of being closed to the public, threatening deliveries by air of freight as well as flights by first responders and recreational pilots.

“We are grateful to Clay Lacy for this incredibly generous gift,” said Conservancy President and CEO Tony Budrovich. “Clay’s longtime involvement with Catalina and Airport in the Sky is deeply appreciated.”

Clay Lacy will be recognized alongside other lead donors on the Catalina Island Conservancy’s donor recognition wall at the main entrance to Airport in the Sky.

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About the Airport in the Sky

The Airport in the Sky is a historical and critical asset that provides access to Catalina Island via air for first responders, travelers, residents and businesses. The airport is the hub for the Island's U.S. Mail, UPS and other carriers. An estimated 3.5 million pounds of freight, which includes medical and emergency supplies, is also shipped through the airport annually. The airport opened in 1946, and the Catalina Island Conservancy took over its operation in 1972, when the Conservancy was formed. The Conservancy operates the Airport in the Sky as a public airport. It is a favorite destination for pilots, who land and take off from the airport about 14,000 times annually.

About the Airport Runway Repair Project

The airport's main landing strip has required frequent patching, costing the Conservancy about \$250,000 a year in labor and materials. The California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Aeronautics Division issues a public use permit for the airport and annually inspects the Airport in the Sky's runway. Caltrans had told the Conservancy that it needed a long-term repair plan in place by September 2018 to continue to operate the airport as a public airport.

Following two years of planning, military equipment arrived on Catalina in December 2018. Over 100 Marines and Seabees arrived on Catalina Island and began work in January to perform the training mission, with nearly 200 Marines and Seabees participating throughout the project. They lived in a tent encampment at the Airport in the Sky working almost every day – weather permitting – to repair the runway.

About the Catalina Island Conservancy

Formed in 1972, the Catalina Island Conservancy is one of California's oldest land trusts. Its mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation. Through its ongoing efforts, the Conservancy protects the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Santa Catalina Island, stewarding approximately 42,000 acres of land and more than 60 miles of rugged shoreline. It provides access to the Island's wildlands and 50 miles of biking and nearly 165 miles of hiking opportunities within its road and trail system. The Conservancy conducts educational outreach through two nature centers, its Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden and guided experiences in the Island's rugged interior. Twenty miles from the mainland, the Island is a treasure trove of historical and archaeological sites. It also contains numerous rare and endangered animals and plants. The Island is home to 60 species – and counting – that are found only on Catalina Island. For additional information, please visit www.catalinaconservancy.org.