



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY™

Catalina Island Conservancy Welcomes Marines and Navy to the Airport in the Sky for Runway Repair Project

*Innovative Partnership Providing Training to the Troops and
Ensuring Airport Remains Open to the Public*

LONG BEACH – (January 9, 2019) – The Catalina Island Conservancy welcomed more than 70 U.S. Marines and Navy Sailors (Seabees) to Catalina Island on Wednesday, as the troops arrived via helicopters at the Airport in the Sky to begin work on repairing the aging main runway at Catalina’s only airport.

They joined about 30 other Marines and Sailors who arrived last week to work on the 3,000-foot-long runway at the airport that is owned and operated by the Conservancy. The nonprofit organization has entered into an innovative partnership with the US Marines and Navy to repair the runway to ensure the airport remains open while also providing the troops with valuable training in a remote location with difficult logistics. The partnership is part of the Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training Program (IRT), which matches community needs with military training opportunities.

The Marines and Sailors quickly established an encampment at the airport that includes housing, food service, hygiene, medical facilities and more. They plan to spend the next three months replacing the airstrip’s asphalt with concrete, creating a much more durable and reliable surface for landing.

The Marines and Sailors expect to finish the repairs by late March 2019, and the airport is slated to re-open to the public soon thereafter, depending on weather and other factors. The troops will work six days a week, and they will rotate on and off the Island over the course of the project, ensuring more Marines and Sailors benefit from the training opportunity.

“We were so pleased to welcome these amazing young men and women to the Island, and we appreciate their can-do spirit about tackling this task,” said Tony Budrovich, Catalina Island Conservancy president and CEO. “The airport was at risk of closure because of the condition of the runway. This innovative partnership with the Marines and Navy will ensure the airport can remain open another 75-100 years, while also providing a training opportunity to prepare the troops for deployment on islands and other remote locations to build or repair airports and other infrastructure.”

The Airport in the Sky is an historic and critical asset because it provides access to Catalina via air for first responders, travelers, residents and businesses. The airport is the Island's delivery hub for the 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.

For years, the Conservancy has been patching the airport's main runway, costing approximately \$250,000 a year. But the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans') Aeronautics Division had told the Conservancy it needed a long-term repair plan in place by September 2018 to continue to operate the airport as a public airport.

The Conservancy spent nearly 18 months working out the partnership with the Marines and Navy to repair the runway, and it had the help of U. S. Rep. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, Gary Cathey, former chief of Caltrans Aeronautics Division, and Patrick Miles, Caltrans aviation safety officer.

"We are committed to being good neighbors to our local communities and frequently volunteer time on an individual and unit basis to countless philanthropic organizations," said 2nd Lieutenant Zachary Bodner, a 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (3rd MAW) spokesman. "It is an honor to partner with the Catalina Island Conservancy, which does so much for the Island."

I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) at Camp Pendleton has assigned 3rd MAW from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar to support this unique training opportunity. The 3rd MAW has identified Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 (MWSS-373) to serve as the lead element for the successful repair of the runway. Naval Construction Group One (NCG1), First Naval Construction Regiment (1NCR) and Navy Mobility Construction Battalion (NCMB-25) personnel will also participate in the project with quality control and medical support.

"The Seabees have a long history of building critical infrastructure and serving alongside the other armed services around the world, and the Catalina airport runway repair project will provide a great training opportunity to prepare Seabees for future missions," said Lt. Saul Perez Ravelo, Civil Engineer Corps, US Navy.

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. For additional information, please visit www.catalinaconservancy.org.

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*Innovative Partnership with Catalina Island Conservancy to
Benefit the Nonprofit Organization and Troops*

LONG BEACH – (December 10, 2018) – The U.S. Marines and Navy will bring approximately 500 tons of equipment and tools to Catalina Island the week of December 17 to prepare for the January arrival of over 100 Marines and Navy Seabees who will repair the aging main runway at the Catalina Island Conservancy’s Airport in the Sky.

This strategic project will provide the troops with valuable training in a remote location with difficult logistics and will ensure the Island’s only airport remains open to the public.

The trucks, construction equipment, tents and other supplies needed to support the runway repair and the troops during their expected three-month stay on Catalina will be shipped from the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro to Catalina Harbor in the Two Harbors area of the Island. The equipment will then travel from Catalina Harbor to the Airport in the Sky on existing roads during the week of December 17.

“We are so appreciative of the Marines’ and the Navy’s commitment to this partnership, and we welcome the arrival of all this equipment they’re providing for the runway repair,” said Tony Budrovich, Catalina Island Conservancy president and CEO. “The airport is an historic and critical asset for Catalina, and the main runway’s condition had put the airport at risk of closure to the public if we hadn’t found this innovative solution to reduce the construction cost. Our partnership with the Marines and Navy will extend the life of the runway for another 75-100 years and help train the troops for deployments to islands and other remote destinations to build or repair airfields and other infrastructure.”

To obtain photos and videos of the equipment arriving the week of December 17, please click [here](#), and please credit the photographers and videographers for any photos or videos used.

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With the help of U. S. Rep. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, Gary Cathey, former chief of Caltrans Aeronautics Division, and Patrick Miles, Caltrans aviation safety officer, the Conservancy reached an agreement for the airport runway to be repaired through the Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training Program (IRT). The program matches community needs with military training opportunities.

"The Catalina Island Conservancy's Airport in the Sky presents a unique training opportunity for Marines and Sailors to conduct relevant, real-world training while providing a service to our local community," said 2nd Lieutenant Zachary Bodner, a 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (3rd MAW) spokesman.

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"Since 1942, U.S. Navy Seabees have served side-by-side with all our nation's Armed Forces to build and defend critical infrastructure to support every major theater operation in our history. From building 6,000-foot ice runways in Antarctica to airstrips in the Pacific, the Seabees have demonstrated their 'Can Do' spirit, and we will do that once again alongside the Marines on the Catalina Island runway repair project," said LT. Saul Perez Ravelo, Civil Engineer Corps, U.S. Navy.

Over the expected three-month course of the repair project, troops will rotate on and off the Island. A group of Marines will travel to Catalina to help transport the equipment to the Island in mid-December and then return to the mainland for the holidays. A smaller group will remain on Catalina over the holidays. Catalina Island Conservancy Board Chair Kellie Johnson plans to host the Marines for Christmas dinner at her Avalon home. The largest contingency of Marines and Sailors will be flown to the Airport in the Sky in early January to begin work on the runway.

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