

Eagle's Nest Lodge to be Reborn

Avalon, CA - 14 November 2013 - Eagle's Nest Lodge will soon once again open its doors to the public. The project anticipated to begin in 2014 entails a careful rehabilitation and reconstruction led by specialists in historic preservation, coupled with current health and safety building standards. A careful planning and review process is nearing completion and care has been taken to minimize impact during construction and operation including its review by multiple agencies. Completion of the project is anticipated for spring 2015.

"Through a major investment of time, talent and funding, Eagle's Nest Lodge will again be an important resource for the Island," said Ann Muscat, Catalina Island Conservancy president and CEO.

The California Cultural and Historical Endowment (CCHE) recognizing the merit of the project and need to take action awarded the Conservancy a planning grant for the project, supplemented by another grant in 2011. Members of the community held fundraisers, Conservancy support groups like the Marineros joined the effort, as well as individuals interested in the history of the Island. Most notably, members of the Schriener and Hagenah families led by Blanny Hagenah supported the initial capital campaign that kept momentum rolling on the project.

Eagle's Nest Lodge is a valued historical and cultural asset, part of the fabric that makes Catalina the interesting destination it is today. "This project a great example of public and private partnership that benefits the Island," Muscat said. "It brings the lodge back to life and once again makes it available to the community and visitors alike."

In 1995 an epic storm washed out sections of Middle Ranch Road and put Eagle's Nest Lodge in peril. The road was rebuilt in 2001, but because of its low-lying location in the canyon, the structure continues to be at risk from water damage and flooding. The building has been closed to the public in its present location since 1995 due to its unsafe condition.

The Conservancy enlisted the aid of architectural firms, to find the new location, a little more than a mile and a half up the road, and on higher ground. When completed the public will once again experience the lodge as it originally looked.

"The CCHE grant recognized the cultural and historic value of Eagle's Nest Lodge as the need to relocate it to a safe, permanent and accessible location," said Joe Kalla, Conservancy chief operating officer responsible for

the project. "This is an exciting and innovative solution that saves the lodge and its historic character while expanding its role at Middle Ranch."

The original structure was built by the Banning brothers in 1896. It served as a hunting lodge and stagecoach stop for people making the two-day trip from Avalon to Two Harbors. It was then modified with additions in the early 1920s. The place took its name from two bald eagles that made their nest in a tree near the lodge.

Once construction has started, the build-out is expected to take at least 12 to 18 months. When completed, visitors will be able to explore exhibit and interpretive displays that showcase the cultural and natural history of the Island as well as Middle Ranch and the people who worked there.

The project will include public space for recreation including a picnic area with small outdoor cooking facilities, a horseshoe pit, walking paths and outdoor stepped seating area for nature lectures or other presentations. The Conservancy's Ackerman Native Plant Nursery staff has already begun propagating native plants to serve as landscaping throughout the entire area.

The treetop eagle's nest is long gone but Eagle's Nest Lodge will live on, standing as an icon, well into the future, once again playing a role in the Island's rich cultural past.

Photos & Captions



An epic storm of 1995 washed out the road, putting the historic Eagle's Nest Lodge in peril.