



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Channel Islands National Park News Release

May 27, 2009

For Immediate Release

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Construction Begins on New Pier for Santa Rosa Island

After several weeks of setting up a base camp and staging materials construction has begun to replace the pier at Bechers Bay on remote Santa Rosa Island. During construction the pier will be closed to the public with completion planned for December 2009.

“We are sorry for any inconvenience this project will have for visitors and others in their travels to Santa Rosa Island this summer and fall,” said National Park Superintendent Russell E. Galipeau Jr. “It is essential that we replace the existing pier now and invest in a new pier that will provide improved access to the island and ensure safe landings for years to come.”

The challenging \$10,978,000 construction project was competitively awarded to American Civil Constructors of Benicia, CA. This firm built a pier on neighboring San Nicolas Island. The new pier, at 574 feet in length, will service about 700 vessel landings each year. The pier will provide primary access to the island for visitors and safe operations for cooperators, researchers, and employees.

The existing pier was originally built in the early 1870s to serve ranching needs on the island. Major repairs or reconstruction of the pier occurred in 1913 and again during World War II in 1945. In 1987 the National Park Service (NPS) made repairs that were temporary in nature and not intended to last for more than 20 years. Since 1987 the pier has suffered heavy corrosion from the marine environment and deterioration from storms that have affected its structural integrity.


The new pier will be built on the same footprint as the existing pier. The height of the pier will be increased to approximately 23 feet above the mean low water height to avoid storm surge, and it will connect to the shore at an elevation matching the original pier elevation.

About Santa Rosa Island

Situated over 40 nautical miles offshore of the California coastline, and second largest in the chain of Channel Islands, the 53,000-acre Santa Rosa Island is a landscape of remarkable contrasts. High mountains with deeply cut canyons give way to gently rolling grass-covered hills, beautiful beaches, and coastal wetlands.

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The island landforms support a diverse array of plant and animal species including six plant species which are found on Santa Rosa and nowhere else in the world. The Santa Rosa Island subspecies of Torrey pine, is considered one of the rarest pines in the world—the last enduring members of a once widespread Pleistocene forest. Santa Rosa Island also hosts over 100 bird and three land mammal species (including the island’s largest native mammal, the endemic island fox), two amphibian and three reptile species, and colonies of seabirds, seals, and sea lions.

Remains of an ancient endemic species, the pygmy mammoth, have been uncovered on Santa Rosa Island. These miniature mammoths, only four to six feet tall, once roamed island grasslands and forests during the Pleistocene. The fossil skeleton discovered on Santa Rosa Island in 1994 is the most complete specimen ever found.

Along with extensive paleontological resources, Santa Rosa Island has rich archeological resources. Home to the Island Chumash until approximately 1820, “Wima” (as the Chumash refer to the island) contains thousands of significant and federally protected archeological sites. Archeological investigations on the island have enabled archeologists to construct a more complete picture of Chumash life on the islands. Radiocarbon dating on some of these sites indicates that humans have been using the island for more than 13,000 years.

Others have come to the island during more recent centuries to exploit its rich resources, sometimes making it their home. In addition to the native Chumash, European explorers, Aleut sea otter hunters, Chinese abalone fishermen, Spanish missionaries, Mexican and American ranchers, and the U.S. military all have left their mark on the Santa Rosa landscape. Visitors can see relics of these occupations in remnants of fishing camps, water troughs and fence lines, the buildings and equipment of the historic Vail and Vickers ranch at Bechers Bay, the remains of the military installations, and a great diversity of sites to be discovered all around the island.

This publication is available on line at: www.nps.gov/chis/parknews/newsreleases.htm