

Eldred Rock Lighthouse Haines

EldredRockLighthouse.org

Property Description: Eldred Rock Lighthouse sits on a very small island located approximately 17 miles south of the town of Haines, Alaska. The island is the last (southernmost) in a string of islands extending south from the Haines peninsula. The lighthouse can be easily observed by the thousands of boats (cruise ships, ferries, fishing boats, etc.) carrying well over a million passengers in Lynn Canal annually. In short, it is iconic. The island itself can be very difficult to reach due to its harsh terrain combined with its infamous weather and challenging sea conditions. For that reason, a helicopter or sturdy marine landing craft is typically necessary to reach the island and lighthouse.

Property history: Built in 1905, Eldred Rock Lighthouse is the oldest original lighthouse in Alaska and the only remaining octagonal frame lighthouse of those built between 1902-1905. It is the only station not rebuilt. It was established because of the many shipwrecks nearby especially during the 1898 Gold Rush, when Lynn Canal was in heavy use. It contained a fourth order Fresnel lens. The light was automated by the US Coast Guard in 1973, and the original lens was moved to the Sheldon Museum in Haines. The lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Why is property endangered?

Eldred Rock Lighthouse has now been unmanned for over 45 years, and as a result the buildings have fallen into disrepair and are considered endangered. The primary reasons for this state of disrepair are due to environmental and logistical challenges and no agency funding to maintain the lighthouse. The extreme weather and environmental conditions greatly contribute to the rate of deterioration. Logistically, the island is very difficult and expensive to access. This makes getting resources—humans, building supplies, etc.—to the island very difficult. The concrete base of the lighthouse is spalling and needs quite a bit of attention. The roofs of the various structures (four buildings on the island) are all in need of some level of repair to prevent water intrusion. Most wood and windows need to be repaired and repainted. Outside, the landscape needs attention to prevent the natural environment from “taking over”. Furthermore, there are environmental factors in and around the lighthouse that need to be cleaned up in order for the property to be safely used by the public

Activities under way to save property: The ERLPA established itself as a non-profit association in 2014 in order to be eligible for conveyance of the property under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. The U.S. Coast Guard, however, has been unable to make Eldred Rock available for conveyance due to environmental factors such as asbestos, lead based paint, and diesel in the soil. ERLPA is working hard to gain a lease for the property in order to be able to restore and maintain the light station and ultimately share it with the public. Volunteers from both Haines and Juneau have engaged in periodically visiting the lighthouse, taking measures to curtail further deterioration and maintaining the grounds. These volunteer activities include painting structures, repairing broken doors and windows, removing refuse, doing yard work, and establishing safe trails and walkways. The non-profit Marine Exchange of Alaska has provided transportation of personnel, tools and supplies using their landing craft as well

as donating funds for materials. While much has been accomplished to arrest the deterioration of the structures, it will take concerted efforts, finances, and many man-hours to restore the property in accordance with NHLPA standards. **Update 2020:** A lease has been acquired by the group.

