

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

April 14, 2026

Drone Pilot Program for Filming at Venice Beach

In March 2026, the reboot of the iconic television series *Baywatch* began filming at Venice Beach. Bringing the series back to Los Angeles is not only symbolic, but also vital to our local economy, supporting hundreds of union jobs and uplifting small businesses while reinforcing our standing as the global hub of the entertainment industry. Given the industry’s importance to both the region and the state, it is essential that the County adopt policies that strike a thoughtful balance between supporting production and addressing broader community needs, including streamlining processes, reducing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, and modernizing contracting and approval systems are key to retaining and attracting filming in the County. To that end, the County is actively exploring ways to support the *Baywatch* production at Venice Beach and across Los Angeles County’s beaches, including evaluating opportunities such as drone filming.

Drone cinematography has become a standard and often indispensable tool in modern film and television production. Productions increasingly rely on drones as a safer,

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quieter, and less intrusive alternative to helicopters, cranes, and other traditional aerial platforms. In many cases, their use reduces impacts on beachgoers, wildlife, and County operations, while improving safety outcomes and minimizing production footprints. Since the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) established the Part 107 commercial drone certification framework, professional UAS operations have been subject to rigorous federal safety standards, including pilot certification, aircraft registration, operational limitations, and airspace authorization requirements. When combined with local permitting and on-site supervision, these federal regulations have enabled many jurisdictions to safely integrate drone filming into their coastal management practices.

The County of Los Angeles currently has a comprehensive prohibition on drone use on County beaches for all purposes, including permitted film and television production. Drones are considered to be under the same classification as “model airplanes” regulated by County Code section 17.12.425, which states that “[n]o person shall operate any model airplane, boat, helicopter, or similar craft in, on, or over any beach or the Pacific Ocean except in an area that may be established and/or designated for such use by the Director, and subject to all rules and regulations pertaining to such area.” The County’s current ordinance represents one of the most restrictive coastal drone prohibitions in the state and places County beaches at a competitive disadvantage relative to neighboring filming locations. As a result, productions increasingly seek comparable coastal visuals outside the County, resulting in lost economic activity, reduced local employment, and diminished utilization of County permitting services.

Across California, several coastal jurisdictions, including certain State Beaches

under the California Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as select counties and municipalities, allow drone use for film and television production through structured permitting processes for specific locations. These frameworks typically require FAA Part 107 compliance, proof of insurance, environmental review, defined flight plans, restricted operating windows, and on-site monitoring by FilmLA. Importantly, these jurisdictions have not reported systemic safety or environmental issues attributable to permitted commercial drone filming.

Los Angeles County beaches are some of the most visited beaches in the world and present unique concerns related to public safety, visitor experience, environmental protection, privacy, and operational oversight. However, with the proper regulations and permitting process for evolving industry practices, improved safety standards, and regulatory models successfully employed elsewhere in California, there is an opportunity for drones to be safely operated for filming purposes. Both the County and the City of Los Angeles are exploring ways to welcome more filming opportunities and to fight to keep the entertainment industry here. As the summer months approach, interest in filming at Los Angeles County beaches continues to grow, presenting an opportunity for the County to respond proactively to the industry's evolving needs. In fact, the County, including the Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH), have already begun a comprehensive review of all beach-use permitting policies, including those prohibiting drones, to reimagine policies and encourage filming on County beaches and align with emerging technology.

I, **THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors suspend Section 22.1 of the Rules of the Board for the limited purpose of considering this motion.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors

1. Find that approval of the proposed actions does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 21065 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, as these are administrative actions, involving the creation of a pilot program that does not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.
2. Direct the Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH), in collaboration with the Los Angeles Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and the Los Angeles County Film Office (Film Office), FilmLA, and County Counsel, to create a Drone Pilot Program (Pilot Program) at Venice Beach that would allow drone use exclusively for permitted film and television productions, while protecting public safety and natural resources. The Pilot Program shall be developed and made available within seven business days of the approval of this motion and remain in effect through July 31, 2026. Such a program shall be administered by FilmLA and should include, but not be limited to the following conditions
 - a) FAA Part 107–certified pilots and registered aircraft only
 - b) Advance submission and approval of detailed flight plans
 - c) Restricted hours of operation and designated launch/landing zones
 - d) Compliance with all applicable flight limits imposed by the FAA and any other regulatory agency
 - e) Environmental and wildlife protections, including seasonal or location-based exclusions

f) Enhanced insurance and indemnification requirements

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct DBH, in collaboration with the DEO, the Film Office, FilmLA, and County Counsel, to report back within 60 days of the conclusion of the pilot program with a comprehensive evaluation of the program's outcomes, including its effectiveness, operational impacts, feedback from production permittee(s) and the public, any public safety or environmental considerations, and recommendations for a permanent program at LA County-managed beaches.

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