AGN. NO._____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER NOVEMBER 10, 2026

ENSURING THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CASTAIC LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA

Since 1969, the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks) has operated and maintained Castaic Lake State Recreation Area, a 12,658-acreage park with 32 miles of lake shoreline. LA County Parks has taken on the operational, maintenance, safety, liability and financial responsibility pursuant to an Operating Agreement with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). Although owned by the State of California, the County has solely managed the recreation area for more than five decades, providing boating, camping, fishing, swimming, hiking, public safety, environmental stewardship, and recreational programming for residents and visitors throughout Southern California.

Castaic Lake State Recreation Area is one of Southern California's premier outdoor recreation destinations and the largest inland public boating facility in Los Angeles County. The recreation area attracts more than one million visitors annually and supports over 22,000 boat launches each year through its 18-lane Main Launch Ramp. Visitor origin data demonstrates that Castaic Lake serves as a true regional recreation destination, drawing visitors from throughout Los Angeles County and neighboring counties including Ventura, Orange, Kern, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara, as well as visitors from across California and neighboring states. The facility's broad geographic draw underscores its importance as a statewide recreational asset.

In addition to its recreational significance, Castaic Lake serves as a critical component of California's State Water Project, providing drinking water to millions of Southern California residents. Protecting water quality while maintaining safe, accessible public recreation is therefore both a regional and statewide responsibility.

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LA County Parks operates three of the four public boating lakes within Los Angeles County and has decades of expertise managing complex bodies of water and water-based recreation facilities. At Castaic Lake, LA County Parks provides all operational management, park maintenance, visitor services, boating operations, lifeguard services, emergency response, law enforcement coordination, environmental protection, and resource stewardship necessary to safely operate this State-owned recreation area. In doing so, LA County Parks also assumes significant operational and liability exposure associated with providing public access to a heavily used State-owned boating facility.

Despite its statewide significance, Los Angeles County and LA County Parks receives no ongoing financial support from the State of California to operate and maintain Castaic Lake. Apart from limited grant funding from DWR to administer the quagga mussel vessel inspection program, LA County Parks bears the entire cost of operating Castaic Lake recreation area, which currently exceeds approximately $3.7 million annually in Net County Cost.

Over the past several decades, the County has invested millions of local taxpayer dollars to preserve public access and maintain aging infrastructure. Much of the recreation area's infrastructure—including the Main Launch Ramp, utilities, roads, parking areas, buildings, and other public facilities—was constructed during the original development of the lake in the late 1960s and early 1970s and has reached or exceeded its intended service life.

A significant concern is the deteriorating Main Launch Ramp, which serves as the primary public boating access point for the recreation area and is currently closed. Preliminary assessments have identified significant deterioration requiring major rehabilitation or reconstruction, with estimated costs can be in multi-million dollars. Reconstruction would require compliance with design standards, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant boating access improvements, enhanced public safety features, and durable concrete launch surfaces. Castaic Lake Main Launch Ramp, which feeds into a drinking water reservoir, is made of asphalt which can cause water quality, environmental and ecological impacts.

Recent wildfires, including the Lake Fire, Route Fire, Hughes Fire, and other wildfire events, have damaged park infrastructure, destroyed over 80% of the mature trees, increased erosion risks, and significantly impacted the recreation and visitor experience. The cumulative impact of the fires has resulted in the loss of thousands of trees impacting the loss of critical tree canopy to combat the increased extreme heat days, habitat and overall sustainability of the park. North Los Angeles County has seen increased days of extreme heat, Castaic Lake has historically served a refuge from heat due to the water-based recreation activities and the tree canopy.

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The State of California has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to modernize and improve public boating infrastructure throughout the State. However, Castaic Lake has not received a comparable level of investment, despite serving one of California's busiest boating recreation areas. This disparity is particularly significant given that Los Angeles County has the largest number of registered boaters in the State of California.

Castaic Lake is a critical regional boating destination and an important recreational asset for millions of Los Angeles County residents. Increased investment in its boating infrastructure would help modernize aging facilities, improve safety and accessibility, enhance the visitor experience, and ensure that Castaic Lake can continue to meet the growing recreational needs of the region. Because the Main Launch Ramp is not currently eligible for existing Division of Boating and Waterways boating access grant funding and is understood to be outside the applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project boundary for State Water Project capital improvements, no dedicated State or federal funding source currently exists to rehabilitate this critical public infrastructure. As a result, the financial responsibility for maintaining a major State-owned boating facility has disproportionately fallen upon Los Angeles County taxpayers.

Likewise, despite the passage of Proposition 4 and the State's commitment to investing in climate resilience, natural resources, and outdoor recreation infrastructure, Castaic Lake State Recreation Area has not received funding sufficient to address its significant capital infrastructure needs.

Due to the Hughes Fire, the Castaic Lake Main Boat Lauch ramp is currently closed. The closure has created a significant funding gap for LA County Parks and has significantly impacted on boating and recreational access. Since its closure the County has received many complaints from the public about the closure of the boat and ramp and the operations of Castaic Lake.

The County of Los Angeles has assumed the vast majority of the financial responsibility for Castaic Lake for more than 50 years. Given this longstanding investment and commitment, significant improvements are now needed throughout the recreation area to address substantial deferred maintenance, enhance public safety, and ensure continued access to recreational opportunities—needs that exceed the County of Los Angeles' ability to address on its own.

The restoration of Castaic Lake should also include a comprehensive reforestation effort to replace trees lost during recent fires. Reforestation will restore critical shade for visitors, improve wildlife habitat, reduce erosion and stormwater impacts, and strengthen the long-term environmental resilience of this important public resource.

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Recognizing the complexity of negotiating a modern operating agreement, the Board of Supervisors previously authorized extensions of the Operating Agreement in 2019, 2021, and 2023 to allow the County, DWR, and State Parks additional time to negotiate a new agreement. The current agreement expires November 7, 2026. At this time, LA County Parks has reached a point where continued operation of this State-owned recreation area must include a significant funding investment from the State of California that reflects the State's ownership responsibilities and provides a long-term partnership and strategy for addressing deferred maintenance and capital infrastructure needs.

Continued operation without a significant State investment in aging infrastructure is no longer fiscally sustainable. The current condition of these facilities exposes the County of Los Angeles to increasing operational, maintenance, and liability risks associated with State-owned infrastructure, while placing an unreasonable and growing financial burden on Los Angeles County taxpayers. A significant State investment is therefore necessary to address deferred maintenance, modernize critical infrastructure, enhance public safety, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Castaic Lake as a vital regional recreational resource for Californians.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Suspend Section 22.1 of the Rules of the Board for the limited purpose of considering this motion.

2. Direct Los Angeles County Parks in coordination with the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to prepare and transmit a five-signature letter to the California Department of Water Resources and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, with copies to the Governor, the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, the Director of California State Parks, the Director of the California Department of Water Resources, the Director of the California Division of Boating and Waterways, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation, requesting that the State:

    a) <u>Establish a Castaic Lake Infrastructure Committee</u>.
    Direct the Director of Parks and Recreation, in coordination with the Chief Executive Office, to establish a Castaic Lake Infrastructure Committee (“Committee”) comprised of executive-level representatives from the California Department of Water Resources, California State Parks, Division of Boating and Waterways, California Natural Resources Agency, and other appropriate State agencies, as well as representatives from Los Angeles County.

    b) <u>Develop a Comprehensive Infrastructure Management and Investment Plan</u>.
    Direct the Committee to develop a comprehensive Infrastructure Management and Investment Plan for Castaic Lake State Recreation Area that identifies

critical deferred maintenance, infrastructure deficiencies, public safety needs, environmental restoration priorities, boating infrastructure improvements, and other capital investments necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the recreation area.

c) Develop a State Funding Plan and Strategy.
Direct the Committee to develop a comprehensive funding plan and strategy to support the identified infrastructure and restoration needs, including exploring opportunities through Proposition 4 (Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024), which provides 10 billion in general obligation bonds for climate risk, water reliability, wildfire mitigation and natural resources protection and other existing State of California infrastructure funding and measures related to climate resilience, water resources, boating access, and outdoor recreation grant programs. The funding strategy shall recognize Castaic Lake's unique role as both a State Recreation Area and a critical component of the State Water Project.

3. Direct the Director of Parks and Recreation, or her designee to negotiate and execute an extension of the existing operating agreement for Castaic Lake for a period not to exceed one year, to provide sufficient time for the State of California and County to develop and implement the infrastructure management and funding strategy described above; and

4. Authorize the Director of Parks and Recreation, or her designee in consultation with the Chief Executive Office to develop a disinvestment and transition plan for returning operational responsibility for Castaic Lake to the State of California if the State does not become a financial partner in addressing the infrastructure, capital, and deferred maintenance needs of Castaic Lake.

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