



CEQA and COASTAL DETERMINATIONS and NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Project: Installation of CoastSnap Beach Monitoring Equipment by University of California, Santa Barbara and University of California, Los Angeles at Imperial Beach Pier
Location: Imperial Beach Pier, Imperial Beach, CA 91932
Parcel No.: 061-006
Project No.: 2025-115
Applicant: Kyle Emery, Ph.D., Researcher, University of California, Santa Barbara, Marine Science Institute – Building 520, Santa Barbara, CA 93117; (609) 760-5993
Date Approved: 10/16/2025

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project would involve the installation of a photo station for beach and coastline data collection on Imperial Beach Pier by researchers affiliated with University of California, Santa Barbara and University of California, Los Angeles (Applicant), as part of the CoastSnap California Program (CoastSnap), in the city of Imperial Beach, California. The proposed project would also include the issuance of a Tidelands and Occupancy Permit (TUOP).

CoastSnap is a community-based beach monitoring program which allows for repeated data collection through community members and beach visitors that utilize the permanent photo stations and CoastSnap app by uploading shoreline images taken from a fixed location over time. CoastSnap photo stations have been distributed in coastal regions across the world, including the state of California, and provide valuable imagery and data to track coastal changes and sea level rise. Images taken from the Imperial Beach Pier would be collected as part of the new CoastSnap California Program, and uploaded to a CoastSnap California web page and image repository so that all California imagery and data would be located in a centralized repository and available to the public. Installation of the proposed project would contribute to a new, statewide coastline monitoring tool that can be utilized by various groups and organizations including citizens, researchers, management agencies, and local governments.

The location of the proposed project was selected due to the pier's proximity to the Border Field State Park, one (1) of the 12 CoastSnap monitoring sites across the state of California. The pier is the nearest location with high foot traffic, ensuring sufficient image collection, and provides an adequate vantage point of the coastline towards Border Field State Park. The proposed photo station would be installed on the eastern end of the pier along the south side railing, within approximately 215 feet of Portwood Pier Plaza.

Work to specifically complete the proposed project would consist of the installation of a metal photo cradle (slightly larger than the average smartphone) and standard A4 sized informational signage (approximately 8.27" x 11.69") on the railing and vertical post of the pier, which would be attached using simple screws. Installation is anticipated to occur in November 2025, with on-going maintenance as necessary, and would require one (1) person with a power drill and screws. The photo station, including the photo cradle and informational signage, would be removed upon expiration of the TUOP or completion of the intended research, whichever occurs first.

Issuance of the TUOP would allow the Applicant for their use of portions of Imperial Beach Pier only for the non-exclusive purpose of scientific research deployment, including installation, operation, maintenance and removal of equipment in place, and for no other purpose whatsoever without the prior written consent of the Executive Director of the District. It is anticipated that the TUOP would have a term of approximately five (5) years. The TUOP may be terminated by the Executive Director of the District or their duly authorized representative or the Applicant as a matter of right and without cause at any time upon the giving of thirty (30) days' notice in writing to the other party of such termination.

The following categorical determinations are based on the project submittal and all project information known to the District as of the date of this determination.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION

Categorical Exemptions: CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (Class 3)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.c: New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures; CEQA Guidelines Section 15306 (Class 6)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.f: Information Collection; and CEQA Guidelines Section 15311 (Class 11)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.i: Accessory Structures

3.c. New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures: Includes construction of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and conversion of existing small structures from one use to another with minor modifications to the exterior of the structure. Examples of this exemption include:

- (2) Accessory (appurtenant) structures and mechanical equipment including, but not limited to, garages, sheds, railway spur tracks, pilings, temporary trailers, industrial equipment enclosures, fences, parking, on-site roadways, walkways and health and safety devices.

AND/OR

3.f. Information Collection: Includes basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which has not yet been approved, adopted or funded.

AND/OR

3.i. Accessory Structures: Includes construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing facilities, including:

- (3) On-premise signs.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines and the Sections of the District's *Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA* as identified above because it would consist of the installation and on-going maintenance of a photo station for the purposes of basic data collection activities which would not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The District has determined none of the six exceptions to the use of a categorical exemption apply to this project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2).

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15062, a 35-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply from the date a Notice of Exemption is posted with the San Diego County Clerk, or a 180-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply if no Notice of Exemption is filed.

CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT

PORT MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY

Planning District: Imperial Beach Oceanfront (Precise Plan Figure 25)

Land Use Designation: Commercial Recreation

The proposed project conforms to the certified Port Master Plan because it would involve the installation and on-going maintenance of a photo station for the purposes of coastline research consistent with the existing certified Land Use designation. The proposed project would not change the use of the site nor would it interrupt or expand the existing conforming uses of the site.

CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION

Categorical Exclusions: Section 8.c: New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures and Section 8.e: Information Collection

8.c. New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures: Construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures and installation of small, new equipment and

facilities, involving negligible or no change of existing use of the property, including but not limited to:

- (3) Accessory structures, including, but not limited to, on-premise signs, small parking lots, fences, walkways, swimming pools, miscellaneous work buildings, temporary trailers, small accessory piers, minor mooring facilities, buoys, floats, pilings, or similar structures; and seasonal or temporary use items such as lifeguard towers, mobile food units, portable restrooms, or similar structures.

AND/OR

- 8.e. Information Collection: Basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major significant disturbance to an environmental resource.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Excluded pursuant to the Sections of the District's *Coastal Development Permit Regulations* as identified above because it would consist of the installation and on-going maintenance of a photo station for the purposes of coastline research that would involve no change of the existing use of the property and would not result in a serious or major significant disturbance to an environmental resource.

Pursuant to California Coastal Act Section 30717, there is a 10-working-day period to appeal this "Coastal Act Categorical Determination of Exclusion" to the California Coastal Commission.

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE

The proposed project complies with Section 87.(a)(5) of the Port Act, which allows for the construction, reconstruction, repair, maintenance, and operation of public buildings, public assembly and meeting places, convention centers, parks, playgrounds, bathhouses and bathing facilities, recreation and fishing piers, public recreation facilities, including, but not limited to, public golf courses, and for all works, buildings, facilities, utilities, structures, and appliances incidental, necessary, or convenient for the promotion and accommodation of any of those uses. The Port Act was enacted by the California Legislature and is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine. Consequently, the proposed project is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine.

SCOTT CHADWICK
President/CEO

Determination by:

Davin Cox
Planner I
Development Services

Signature: _____
Date: 10/16/2025

Assistant/Deputy General Counsel

Signature: Shiraz Tangri
Date: 10/16/2025