



**CEQA and COASTAL DETERMINATIONS
and
NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

Project: Drone Show Event by Drone Studios on behalf of Hilton San Diego Bayfront at Embarcadero Marina Park South
Location: 200 Marina Park Way, San Diego, CA 92101
Parcel No.: 019-062
Project No.: 2026-022
Applicant: Jeff Stein, Drone Pilot, Drone Studios, 575 Sixth Ave Unit 1202, San Diego, CA 92101
Date Approved: 2/26/2026

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for an approximately 10-minute drone show on March 27, 2026, by Drone Studios on behalf of Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel at Embarcadero Marina Park South (EMPS) in San Diego, CA. The drones would be deployed from and landed at the southern edge of EMPS and displayed east of the launch site directly over the water. The proposed event would have a duration of one (1) day, including set-up in the afternoon and clean-up in the evening.

A temporary safety perimeter would be established along the southern edge of EMPS along a small section of the waterfront walkway. Pedestrian access within the safety perimeter would be temporarily restricted for approximately 15 minutes using cones, caution tape and enforced by staff during the drone show. A nearby alternative walkway and adjacent park space would remain open at all times. Following the approximately 15-minute period, the walkway and park space would be reopened. No other closures of the walkways are anticipated to occur. The safety perimeter would also include the flight area and the water area over which the drones would be displayed, prior to and during the drone show. The proposed event would be able to be viewed by the public without cost from multiple locations throughout the Embarcadero. Once the drone show concludes and the drones are secured, the safety perimeter would be removed. In the unlikely event a drone descends into the water, a net would be used to collect the drone immediately.

Staging for the proposed event would be within the safety perimeter and consist of approximately 100 drones. The drone show operation would have staff assigned as visual observers. Visual observers are responsible for scanning and monitoring for any and all airborne activity, such as aircraft, failed drones, and activity involving wildlife, and reporting any relevant observations to the District. Event staff would occupy approximately 3 spaces in the nearby EMPS public parking lot. Additionally, the Applicant is required to comply with FAA regulations and obtain any applicable approvals.

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 15304 (Class 4)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.d: Minor Alterations to Land

- 3.d. Minor Alterations to Land: Includes minor alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation not involving the removal of mature, scenic trees, including, but not limited to:
 - (6) Minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines and the Section of the District's *Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA* as identified above because it is for a temporary event that would result in no permanent effects on the environment, and would not involve the removal of mature, scenic trees. 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: 3 - Centre City Embarcadero (Precise Plan Figure 11)

Land Use Designations: Park/Plaza and Promenade

The proposed project conforms to the certified Port Master Plan because it would involve a temporary drone show event at EMPN consistent with the existing certified Land Use designations. 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 Exclusion: Section 8.d: Minor Alterations to Land

8.d. Minor Alterations to Land (District Coastal Development Permit Guidelines: Minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve the removal of mature, scenic trees, including but not limited to:

- (5) Minor temporary uses of land and water having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment, including festivals, boating activities, parades, and running or bicycling events

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Excluded pursuant to the Section of the District's *Coastal Development Permit Regulations* as identified above because it is for a temporary event that would have a negligible, or no permanent, effect on the environment, nor would it involve the removal of mature, scenic trees.

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 paces, 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:
Betsy Viramontes
Planner I
Development Services

Signature: Betsy Viramontes
Date: 2/26/2026

Assistant/Deputy General Counsel

Signature: Shiraz Tangri
Date: 2/26/2026