

Santa Cruz County Film Commission Information on Drone Filming

The Santa Cruz County Film Commission, a department within Visit Santa Cruz County is a referral agency for commercial film productions taking place within the region. Please see the requirements below for filming with a drone in the various municipalities and other areas within Santa Cruz County. Should you need additional information, please reach out to the jurisdiction directly.

[Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary](#)

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is the second largest federally protected body of water in the United States. Therefore, responsible filming practices must be observed when considering projects over and near the water. Obtaining permits for prohibited activities in the Sanctuary is part of this process.

The MBNMS and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife prohibit aerial flights under 1,000 feet along Santa Cruz County's coastline due to the sensitivity of the marine and bird life in the area. Failure to maintain a minimum altitude of 1,000 feet above ground level above any such zone is presumed to disturb marine mammals or seabirds. However, permits may be obtained in some cases.

Common activities that require a MBNMS permit and approval include but are not limited to: filming operations, overflights, flying below 1000-feet within a NOAA Regulated Overflight Zone and others. This is not a complete list so carefully evaluate your proposed activity, or contact permitting staff for more detailed information.

MBNMS processes permits for use of an Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). For further information, see MBNMS's [Aircraft, Model Aircraft & Drones web page](#).

[Detailed permitting information can be found here.](#)

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Film Contact:

Sophie De Beukelaer

99 Pacific Street, Bldg 455A

Monterey, CA 93940

Phone: 831-647-1286

FAX: 831-647-4250

sophie.debeukelaer@noaa.gov

[City of Santa Cruz](#)

The City of Santa Cruz requires permits for commercial activities, including activities for promotional purposes. Currently, private use of drones for recreational purposes does not require a permit.

Depending on the proposal other conditions may apply at the time of final permit issuance. More information about filming in the City of Santa Cruz can be found [here](#).

The following documentation is required to film within the City of Santa Cruz using a drone:

1. A completed [film permit application](#) submitted no less than three (3) days prior to production date
2. Payment of all fees at time of application
3. A map of route or layout of all locations for intended use
4. Use of drones, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for filming requires FAA certification/licenses for all pilots or operators
5. Proof of current licenses/certification must be provided to the event permit office prior to filming
6. [\\$2,000,000 insurance certificate](#), with an endorsement, must be submitted and approved prior to filming

City of Santa Cruz Film Contact:

323 Church Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

www.santacruzparksandrec.com

Phone: 831.420.5270

Fax: 831.420.5271

Contact: eventpermits@cityofsantacruz.com

City of Capitola

The City of Capitola requires a permit for filming, however there are no ordinances in place for the use of drones for filming beyond current FAA requirements.

City of Capitola Film Contact:

420 Capitola Ave., Capitola, CA 95010

www.cityofcapitola.org

Phone: 831.475.7300

Fax: 831.479.8879

Contact: Edna Basa, Deputy City Clerk, ebasa@ci.capitola.ca.us

City of Scotts Valley

The City of Scotts Valley requires a permit for filming, however there are no ordinances in place for the use of drones for filming beyond current FAA requirements.

City of Scotts Valley Film Contact:

1 Civic Center Dr.

Scotts Valley, CA 95066

www.scottsvalley.org

Phone: 831.440.5600

Fax: 831.438.2793

Contact: Mali LaGoe, City Manager, mlagoe@scottsvalley.gov

City of Watsonville

The City of Watsonville requires a permit for filming, however there are no ordinance in place for the use of drones for filming beyond current FAA requirements. More information can be found [here](#).

There are FAA specific requirements in place for flying UAS (Drones) within the airport influence area (AIA). The AIA encompasses land within two miles of the boundaries of the Watsonville Municipal Airport. An automated process can be [found here](#). Adherence to the requested action and notification is required.

The Watsonville Municipal Airport requires a permit be issued if there is commercial (for profit) filming on the field. [Click here for more information](#).

City of Watsonville Film Contact:

215 E. Beach Street #2000

P.O. Box 50000

Watsonville, CA 95077

www.cityofwatsonville.org

Phone: 831.768.3247

Fax: 831.728.9036

Contact: Israel Tirado, Special Events Committee Chair, israel.tirado@cityofwatsonville.org

County of Santa Cruz

The County of Santa Cruz requires a permit for filming, however there are no ordinances in place for the use of drones for filming beyond current FAA requirements. There may also be specific requirements for filming in unincorporated areas and in areas close to or over beaches and water. Please contact the County of Santa Cruz directly for specific questions.

County of Santa Cruz Film Contact:

701 Ocean St, Room 520

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Phone: 831.454.3490

Fax: 831.454.3420

Contact: David Brown, david.brown@santacruzcounty.us

Santa Cruz Port District – Santa Cruz Harbor

The Port District does not have any ordinances permitting or prohibiting drones from flying over the harbor or harbor beach. For recreational drone filming, refer to any applicable [City](#) or [State](#) drone laws and regulations. For inquiries regarding commercial drone filming, contact the harbor office regarding obtaining a special event / film permit.

Santa Cruz Port District – Santa Cruz Harbor Film Contact:

135 Fifth Ave.

Santa Cruz, CA 95062

www.santacruzharbor.org

Phone: 831.475.6161

Fax: 831.475.9558

Contact: Renee Ghisletta, Administrative Services Manager, rghisletta@santacruzharbor.org

UC Santa Cruz

The UCSC campus is within five nautical miles of the Dominican Hospital helipad and drone pilots should always be aware of helicopter traffic. FAA regulations prohibit the use of drones for non-recreational purposes within five nautical miles of an airport, or approximately 5.7 land miles.

The general FAA drone flight guidelines apply to filming with a drone at UCSC:

- Fly at or below 400 ft
- Keep your UAS within sight
- Never fly near other aircraft, especially near airports
- Never fly over groups of people and always respect the privacy of others
- Never fly over stadiums or sports events
- Never fly near emergency response efforts such as fires
- Never fly under the influence
- Be aware of airspace requirements

Due to the dense tree canopy of upper campus, most drone flights are conducted above the lower campus open fields.

All drone flights should be [registered through the UC portal](#). The University of California, Office of the President, operates the drone program and establishes the rules governing the use of drones on campuses.

[Please click here for detailed information.](#)

UC Santa Cruz Film Contact:

1156 High Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95064

www.ucsc.edu

Phone: 831.459.2495

Contact: Carolyn Lagattuta, Executive Assistant and Staff Photographer, clagattu@ucsc.edu