



Doheny State Beach Foundation

Photo Contest Rules

Official Guidelines and Requirements for Participation

Introduction

Welcome to the Doheny State Beach Photo Contest! This event is designed to celebrate the breathtaking beauty, vibrant community, and unique wildlife of Doheny State Beach. We invite photographers of all skill levels to showcase their talents and share their perspectives on one of Southern California's most iconic coastal destinations. To ensure fairness, creativity, and clarity for all participants, please read the following rules and guidelines thoroughly before submitting your entries.

Eligibility

- The contest is open to all individuals who are at least 18 years of age at the time of entry. Minors under the age of 18 may enter with parental or guardian consent.
- Employees, volunteers, and immediate family members of the Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association and contest organizers are not eligible to participate.

How it Works

1. Round 1 is a qualification round. Submit up to 5 photographs in any category.
2. Qualification round deadline is December 31st, 2025, at 11:59pm (Pacific Time). All entries must be submitted by this deadline to qualify.
3. Round 1 photographs will be judged on criteria listed below in the Judging Criteria section.
4. The top 10 photos from each category will move on and the winners are notified via email.
5. Round 2 please follow the rules listed in “How to submit your photos for round 2” section.

Contest Categories:

1. Landscape & Scenery: Capturing the natural beauty, sunsets, and sweeping vistas of Doheny State Beach.
2. Wildlife: Showcasing birds, marine life, and other animals in their natural habitats within the park.
3. People & Activities: Illustrating human interaction, recreation, sports, and enjoyment of the beach environment. [Click here for model release form](#)
4. Conservation & Stewardship: Highlighting the importance of preserving and caring for the park and its ecosystems.
5. Black and White in Doheny State Beach
6. Nightscapes of Doheny State Beach
7. Cell Phone Photos: The cell phone category is for people who shoot pictures via mobile device for fun and do not use complicated, heavy and expensive equipment. Photo editing must follow existing guidelines for other categories.

How to Enter-Round 1

- Entries must be submitted electronically via email to photocontest@dohenystatebeach.org
- Each participant may submit up to five (5) photographs.
- All submissions must include:
 - Photographer's name
 - Contact information (email and phone number)
 - Title of the photograph
 - Date and location of the photograph taken (must be Doheny State Beach)
 - A short caption or description (up to 10 words)

Submissions must be received by 11:59 PM (Pacific Time) on the contest deadline December 31, 2025. Late entries will not be considered.

Finalists moving onto round 2 will be notified via email by January 14th, 2026.

Photo Requirements

- Photos must be taken within the boundaries of Doheny State Beach (including the beach, tide pools, campgrounds, park facilities, and surrounding natural areas).
- Photographs must be original works taken by the entrant and may not infringe upon the rights of any other party.
- Only digital photo files (JPEG or PNG format) will be accepted. Minimum file size: 2 MB. Maximum file size: 10 MB.
- Basic editing (cropping, color correction, exposure adjustments) is permitted, but composite images or content-altering manipulation (adding or removing elements) are not allowed.
- Photos may be in color or black and white.
- Watermarks or photographer's signatures must not appear on submitted images.

Judging Criteria

- A panel of judges will evaluate the submitted photos digitally (Round 1) and then again when prints are submitted (Round 2). The criteria below will be used to judge all entries and grant awards. These criteria are listed in no order. The decision of the judges is final.
- Photographs will be evaluated based on:
 - Creativity and originality
 - Composition and technical quality
 - Relevance to the contest theme and category
 - Visual impact and storytelling
 - Focus
 - Proper Exposure

The decisions of the judging panel are final and binding in all respects.

Prizes

- Winners in each category will receive ribbons and feature placement on Doheny State Beach Foundation websites and social media channels.
- Grand Prize: Overall Best in Show- Explorer annual parking pass and a gift basket of Doheny State Beach merchandise.
- First, Second and Third place in each category will receive ribbons and a gift DSBF membership.
- Honorable mention ribbons awarded in each category
- Online People's Choice Award, announced at the end of the viewing period.

Winners Notification and Announcement

- Winners will be notified by email and/or phone within two weeks after the contest Round 2 deadline.
- Results will be announced via the contest website, social media, and at an awards presentation held at Doheny State Beach.
- Winning photographs may be displayed at park events, in publications, and online.

Rights & Usage

- By entering the contest, participants grant Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association and California State Parks and affiliates non-exclusive rights to reproduce, display, and distribute submitted photographs in any media for promotional, educational, or other non-commercial purposes, with credit to the photographer.
- Photographers retain copyright to their images.
- No commercial use of submitted photographs will occur without explicit permission from the photographer.

California State Parks Regulations Compliance:

- All photographs/photographers must adhere to and follow regulations set by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Applicable codes can be downloaded from the DPR website [here](#). They are abbreviated for the purpose of this contest as follows.
- All participants must respect park rules, natural habitats, and the privacy of others while photographing within the park.
- Do not disturb wildlife, injure, distress in an effort to gain a photograph. This includes baiting, trapping, capturing, and/or handling.
- Plants, entrants must not disturb any plant to gain a photograph. This includes picking, manipulating, digging up, and/or removal of any living or dead plant part.
- Photos depicting unsafe, illegal, or unethical behavior will be disqualified.

Disqualification

- Entries that do not meet the contest requirements or are found to be plagiarized or manipulated will be disqualified.
- Any attempt to influence the judges or tamper with the contest process may result in disqualification.
- Double Exposure Photographs: will be excluded from judging. Double exposure is a technique that combines two different exposures or images that are layered on top of each other.
- Composite Photographs: Will be excluded from judging. A composite photograph is one which combines elements from two unrelated, different photos into the same image. An example of this would be super imposing an animal from one location onto a rock in another.
- Photo Editing: There are no restrictions on photo editing, except for the composite image exclusion above. Black and white conversions, color alterations and other enhancements will all be judged within the context of the contests' theme.
- Identifying Marks: Do not add a signature or watermark to your photograph. Signatures or watermarks will be disqualified, as they jeopardize the anonymity of the contest.

General Conditions

- Organizers reserve the right to modify, suspend, or cancel the contest at any time for any reason.
- By entering, participants agree to abide by these official rules and the decisions of the judging panel.

Contact Information

For further inquiries or clarification regarding the photo contest, please contact the Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association at info@dohenystatebeach.org or visit the official contest webpage.

We look forward to seeing your vision of Doheny State Beach—good luck, and happy photographing!

How to Submit your Photo if you are Selected for Round 2

Read carefully! Submissions not following this format will be disqualified.

For questions, please email scotts@dohenystatebeach.org

Submission Deadline: Your properly mounted photo and \$5/photo submission fee must be received in the DSBF office no later than February 4th, 2026.

We will notify those selected for the Final Judge Review via email by January 14th, 2026.

****By submitting mounted photographs, photographers give DSBIA dba DSBF permission to sell the print, with all proceeds to benefit DSBF programs. DSBF also has the right to use submitted photos in their marketing efforts, including but not limited to: social media, printed materials, program flyers, and emails.****

Submission Guidelines (see examples on the following page)

1. Each photograph must be attached to a white 11"x14" foam core or mount/matte board, no thicker than 3/16" (available at most craft stores/art/photography stores). No metal mounts.
2. The photograph itself may be any size, up to 11"x14", color or b/w, vertical or horizontal
3. Each photo must have the entry form attached to the back.
4. If the photo includes identifiable people, you must attach a model release form signed by all those in the photograph, or the legal guardians if under the age of 18.

Disqualification in Round 2

1. Frames, mattes, glass or plastic covers of any kind. DSBF will insert all prints into protective sleeves upon arrival in our office.
2. Signatures, writing or other identifying information on the front of the images. This ensures that participants remain anonymous during the Final Judge Review.

Submitting your Photo(s)

Mail or drop off your photo(s) at the DSBF Administrative Office:

Doheny State Beach Foundation

25300 Dana Point Harbor Road

Dana Point, CA 92629

DSBF's office is open Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

All material will be handled with reasonable care. However, DSBF assumes no responsibility for the safety of any photos.

Return of Photos:

Unsold entries must be picked up in person at the DSBF office. DSBF is unable to return photos by mail. Photos must be claimed by April 1st, 2026. Any photos left after April 1st, 2026, become the property of Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association dba Doheny State Beach Foundation and can be sold in the State Park Store with all funds benefiting DSBF programs.

Example of Correct and Incorrect Mounting Methods

This is okay, white foam core and/or white matte



This is NOT OKAY (black foam core and/or matte)



1. Online Submission Deadline: December 31st, 11:59pm (Pacific Time)
2. Initial Judge Review Round 1: January 1st – January 13th 2026
3. Round 2 Print Submission Window: January 15th – February 4th 2026
4. Final Judge Review Round 2: February 5th – February 18th 2026
5. Online People's Choice Voting (Photographs submitted during Round 1):
January 15th – February 18th 2026
6. Finalist (Winner) Notification: February 19th, 2026
7. Opening Reception and Gallery Display: March 5th (weather permitting)