
Letter: A Calmer, Safer, and More Enjoyable Fourth of July for Crescent City

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Opinion

This year's Fourth of July in Crescent City was, in a word, refreshing. As someone who has spent the last fifteen years working on Independence Day for the Crescent City Harbor District, I can honestly say that 2025 was the most enjoyable and well-managed holiday I've seen. While I approached this year's festivities with some skepticism, given the chaos of years past, those concerns were quickly laid to rest thanks to outstanding coordination among local agencies and a strong sense of community pride.

Shortly after the holiday, I had the opportunity to participate in an after-action review with representatives from the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Office, Crescent City Police Department, Crescent City Fire & Rescue, the California Highway Patrol, and the California Office of Emergency Services. What we heard from each agency echoed the same sentiment: this year was a significant improvement over the last.

Sheriff Scott reported approximately 300 calls for service between midnight on July 4th and midnight on July 5th, a volume that, while still busy, was managed efficiently thanks to increased law enforcement presence. CCFR Chief Bill Carey even remarked that the day felt more like a normal shift than a major holiday. This level of calm is a testament to the preparation and teamwork that went into planning this year's events.

In fact, every agency at the meeting shared stories of community feedback that echoed the same praise: “It was so much nicer this year.” I couldn’t agree more. Illegal fireworks were minimal, emergency calls were manageable, and the atmosphere throughout Crescent City and the Harbor District was one of relaxed celebration. It felt like a return to what the Fourth of July is meant to be, an occasion for families, friends, and neighbors to come together in a spirit of patriotism and fun.

The day’s festivities kicked off with a lively parade that lasted nearly two hours and drew an enthusiastic crowd. The deck party that followed added to the celebratory vibe, offering music, food, and community connection. It was encouraging to see so many young families throughout the Harbor District, all appearing to enjoy themselves in a safe and respectful manner.

Visitors came not only from Del Norte County but from across the country, with license plates spotted from as far away as New York and Texas. While the city center may not have been as busy as in previous years, every local RV park reported being full, and the Harbor District’s overnight dry camping option once again proved popular. It’s clear that Crescent City continues to be a desirable destination for holiday travelers seeking a coastal escape.

Some have commented that this year’s festivities felt a bit more subdued than in years past. I see that as an opportunity: room to grow in a direction that prioritizes safety, family-friendly activities, and long-term sustainability. The Harbor District, city, and county now have a successful model to build upon for next year’s celebration.

Perhaps the most striking improvement came after the fireworks show. Historically, the Harbor District has faced post-fireworks traffic jams, fender benders, and trash-strewn streets, some even comparing it to a “war zone.” But not this year. Traffic control wrapped up in under an hour, with vehicles exiting the inner basin smoothly. There were no car accidents, no trash fires, and remarkably little debris left behind. A notable departure from years past.

In fact, cleanup efforts on July 5th revealed another major win. A volunteer with the Smith River Alliance, who assisted with beach cleanup, noted that trash collected at the same time of day was less than half of what it had been last year. That’s a powerful sign that visitors attending under the revised rules are conducting themselves more respectfully.

This year the Harbor District implemented a new \$5 inner basin parking fee and \$35 dry camping option, which were initiatives designed not just to better manage traffic and usage, but to generate revenue for maintenance and post-event cleanup. This year, those fees, combined with RV park income, brought in just over \$7,500, all of which will be reinvested directly into keeping the harbor clean and welcoming.

Ultimately, the 2025 Fourth of July was a community success story. It showed what can be achieved when agencies work together, when residents and visitors alike take responsibility for their surroundings, and when public spaces are respected and well-managed. Crescent City took a meaningful step forward this year, and I’m proud to have been a part of it.

The Crescent City Harbor District looks forward to continued collaboration with the city, the county, local tribes, and community partners as we build on this success. We're grateful to everyone who came out to celebrate, and we can't wait to welcome you back next Fourth of July, for what we hope will be an even better, brighter, and cleaner holiday.

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