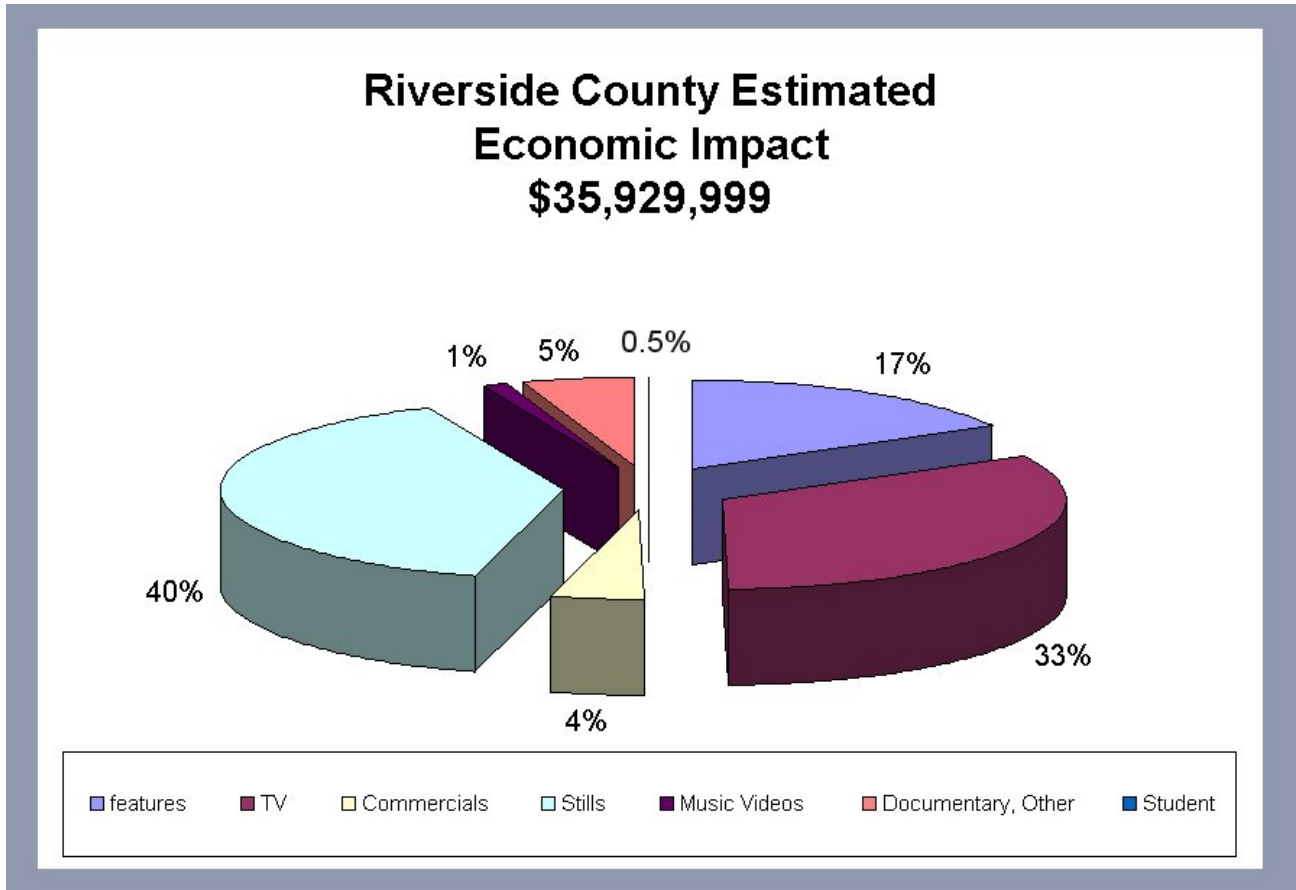


INLAND EMPIRE FILM COMMISSION
Annual Status Report
July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006

This annual report is for Riverside County –Fiscal Year 2005/2006.



Under the Inland Empire Film Commission’s (IEFC) Program of Work for the County of Riverside, the IEFC has six main tasks. These are to:

- 1.) Promote and market film projects throughout Riverside County
- 2.) Provide film industry standards of service to location managers and producers
- 3.) Track pertinent data regarding filming in Riverside County
- 4.) Maintain and manage an informative website
- 5.) Develop a strategy for tax incentives
- 6.) Maintain and manage a location library

The following will address how we accomplish those tasks.

TASK 1: Promote and Market Film Projects Throughout Riverside County

Motion picture and television production is of major economic importance to California.



It is a \$33 billion industry that sustains 300,000 jobs for the state. Film productions produce revenue in the form of permit fees, and boost the local economy by using local hotels, restaurants, suppliers, and transportation.

One of the County's tools for capturing its piece of film industry prosperity is the IEFC. The IEFC has been working hard to increase feature filming, videography, episodics, and still photography in our region.

Successful marketing of the County's locations and filming infrastructure (crew and services) has made the County attractive for production. For example, a large part of the successful marketing in Coachella Valley is due to the relationship between the IEFC and the Coachella Valley Film Alliance (IENFA).

In the 2005/2006 fiscal year, in order to secure economic gain, the IEFC accomplished the following marketing responsibilities:

- **COACHELLA VALLEY FILM ALLIANCE** - The IEFC markets the CVFA companies and professional crew for jobs whenever possible. The CVFA was developed by the IEFC for the sole purpose of developing and encouraging film activities in the Coachella Valley. The Members of the Alliance are working together to explore and promote both short and long projects. They hold meetings the first Monday of every month to network, strategize and implement ways to accomplish this task.



- **FILM FESTIVALS** - The IEFC promoted the County's film-friendliness to filmmakers at both the Temecula Valley International Film Festival and the Big Bear Film Festival in addition to meeting filmmakers that were screening at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

The IEFC met with numerous filmmakers about how the County supports filming at its diverse locations, works with its communities to help filmmakers meet their budgets, and has the infrastructure (i.e. CVFA) to sustain any size film project.

Due to the fact that the industry is always in search of numerous and varied locations, any specific region is well served by a focused as well as a broad marketing approach to the diversity of locations available with minimal travel times.



- **SPECIALIZED SCOUTING** - We have designed and implemented numerous location scouts and have involved many local businesses who are eager and active in working with the IEFC to get more production into the County.



“I can appreciate how much work these tours require and yet the IEFC makes it appear so effortless. Everything you touch oozes class,” stated Richard McMillan, Location Manager. John Grant’s comments to the IEFC were “Thank you for a well planned

and well executed tour as always! It is a privilege to work with the IEFC and call you a colleague.”

- **INDUSTRY TRADE SHOWS** - Exhibited at Locations Trade Show in Santa Monica. The trade show, produced by the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), is the largest and one of the longest running in the entertainment industry. More than 3,600 film production leaders came to see the wares of more than 235 film commissions and vendors. The Inland Empire Film Commissioner talked with studio executives, location scouts,

movie directors, and producers about the advantages of filming in the Inland Empire with an emphasis on the mountains and desert region.

Another industry trade show was Cinegear which was held in Burbank. Cinegear is the premiere trade show that focuses the entertainment production and the post production communities.

- **LOCALLY DEVELOPED FILM PROJECTS** – Currently the CVFA has developed seven treatments for episodic television shows centered in the



Valley. Conrad Ricketts, Senior Producer of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (winner of the People’s Choice Award) met with the CVFA members to explore all of the possibilities for moving their projects forward. There are treatments specifically designed for Indian Wells, Palm Springs and the Aqua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians which Mr. Ricketts felt were extremely well written and could be picked up for their first season. We are currently looking for funding for the initial

treatment so that the project can be marketed to the studios and production companies.

- **CALIFORNIA ON LOCATION AWARDS (COLA)**– IEFC’s Director has served as Chairman or Co-Chair for 9 years of the COLA Awards. This event was created by Sheri Davis and Kim McNulty (then the film liaison for the Coachella Valley) 11 years ago. This event has generated publicity about the Inland Empire and the County as a filming locale. As co-chair of this statewide event, the IEFC’s Director was interviewed by numerous trade papers such as the *Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety* and *Production Update Magazine*.



The IEFC then co-hosted the 500+ guests who came to the Los Angeles Marriott Downtown on October 23, 2005, to honor Location professionals and production companies for their excellence when filming in California.

- **COACHELLA VALLEY IEFC OFFICE** - The IEFC has a production office in the City of Palm Springs with a local staff resource. The Local IEFC contact is Colleen Gross at 760-864-1313. This office has production space for a location manager/scout to use during their scouting in the Coachella Valley.



- **EXAMPLES OF MEDIA COVERAGE**

Channel 10’s Gloria Greer’s Show - 2005

Generated Publicity about the Coachella Valley as a filming destination through the continuing broadcast about the Film Commission and what it does on behalf of the valley. This interview with the Film Commissioner aired to thousands of households in the Coachella Valley. The interview included discussion about revenue for local communities and the promotional benefits that film and still photo projects bring to the Coachella Valley. The program ran approximately 20 times during the week.

Production Update Magazine, April 2005 Edition

Richard MacMillian, Los Angeles based Location Manager stated “In my experience as a film location manager, I see the role of the film commissioner as one of prime importance. In that regard I would single out Sheri Davis, Film Commissioner of the Inland Empire as one of the best. She is always prepared and ready to go on a project. Problems, related to filming in her jurisdiction, melt like a warm knife curing through butter.”

Press-Enterprise – Metro Final Edition, April 19, 2005

“The Aesthetic value of the desert is amazing – there’s nothing like it.” Laura Lee Kasten, Location Manager for ABC-TV’s “Alias.” “California is way over-regulated for the movie industry . . . there’s a lot of permits to work here. [Davis] helped us in navigating our way through those processes,” said Andrew Ullman, Location Manager for “The Island.” John Kalish of the Palm Springs Bureau of Land Management credits Davis for screening “out any potential red flags and issues on species.”

Press-Enterprise – Metro Final Edition/PE.com, April 27, 2006

“. . . Christiano [from Five & Two Pictures] says he found [the Riverside/San Bernardino area] a hospitable shooting environment, aided greatly by the Inland Empire Film Commission. ‘The film commission let us film in their offices,’ Christiano said.”

The Los Angeles Times – Inland Empire Edition, March 28, 2005

Inland Empire based economist John Husing said “[filming] allows us to put economic energy that otherwise wouldn’t go [to the region] . . . [this] is extremely important to counties as big and diverse as Riverside and San Bernardino.” Location Manager for “Imposter” Marilyn Bitner said of Davis when she arranged for a mobile coffee stand to be sent to an abandoned mine in Desert Center – “If you can produce that kind of thing out in the middle of the desert, she makes you look good to your producer . . . that kind of support is so valuable you can’t put a price on it.”



- **The Desert Sun, May 05, 2006**

“Helping lure the film crew to the Coachella Valley was Sheri Davis, director of the Inland Empire Film Commission. ‘Sheri is always an invaluable source of assistance and information,’ Dresser said [Key Location Manager for MI:3]. Securing permission from wind farm owners SeaWest Windpower Inc. took some finesse.”

TASK 2: Provide film industry standards of service to location managers and producers

The Inland Empire Film Commission provided production, location, permitting, and troubleshooting assistance to filmmakers on a daily basis. This customer service included acting as the primary liaison between the entertainment industry and all levels of government to eliminate barriers to filming in Riverside County. By responding informatively and quickly, the IEFC and our partners were able to secure numerous projects and to keep film work moving smoothly throughout the County. The IEFC met the following responsibilities of service:



- The IEFC fielded more than 7,300 telephone calls and more than 5,800 e-mails in the 2005/2006 fiscal year from studio executives, film directors, producers, location managers, student filmmakers, local production companies, hotels, press, and others about the County's sites and entertainment services. These numbers represent more than 1,825 telephone calls and 1,450 e-mails received by the Film Commission each quarter.



- Planned, scheduled, and conducted numerous scouting tours around Riverside County for locations managers, scouts, and production executives.
- Reported to the press (local and beyond) when they called about the numbers and types of film productions in the County, popular filming locations, which studios are scouting with us, what the Film Commission does, and other information.

TASK 3: Track pertinent data

This past fiscal year, the IEFC fielded telephone calls and e-mails seeking information about where and how to film in our region. A number of independent production companies were assisted by the IEFC relative to keeping their budgets in line when



filming in Riverside County. The CVFA with their experienced crews and services is invaluable in meeting production companies budget constraints. Through these direct contacts -- including visitors who arrive at the Film Commission Office -- the IEFC brought filming to the County that might not otherwise have come. There is no other entity in the County that offers this broad, experienced service.

The total number of production days was 1,098 with approximately 70% reported (the production days currently only includes the City of Palm Springs and the County's unincorporated areas – we are still in the process of getting the other incorporated cities' information). The breakdown of the permitted production days is as follows: features: 87; TV series/commercials: 227; corporate videos/ documentaries: 53; music videos: 14; student films: 6; and still commercial, catalog and high fashion photography: 711.

The total number of dollars spent in Riverside County in the 2005/2006 fiscal year by film, video, and still photography projects is not easy to calculate. The latest estimated economic impact numbers for the County are \$35,929,999, less the not yet recorded information.

- Examples of Feature film support include: working with the location department for **Mission Impossible 3** (starring Tom Cruise) which filmed at the wind turbines off of I10 in the Palm springs area; the production company for **Unknown** (starring James Cavievel, Greg Kinnear, Joe Pantoliano) for the right locations in the Desert Center area; the feature film **Phat Girlz** (starring Mo'Nique, Eric Roberts) shot in the City of Palm Springs for several weeks; and **Reunion** (a small independent film) shot almost exclusively in Palm Springs basing the production at the Palm Mountain Resort. Reunion has won a number of film festival awards nationally. There were 6 other small independent films that used locations in the unincorporated areas of Riverside County.



Some examples of TV production included **Date My Mom, The Comeback, The Great Adventure, American Idol** and **Sell this House**.

Examples of Commercial production included **Greyhound, 6 Week Body Makeover, Mercury Insurance, Automobile Club of Texas** and **GMC Yukon**.

Examples of still photography include **GQ Magazine, Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdales, South Coast Plaza Spring book, Reebok, Money Magazine, Ralph Lauren's "Turquoise Photo", Macy's, Eddie Bauer, Dixie Chicks album cover** and **French Glamour**.

TASK 4: Maintain and manage an informative website

The IEFC website, www.filminlandempire.com, is being used every month at a growing rate. The website is sophisticated and showcases Inland Empire locations (broken down by location type), pertinent information on the Inland Empire cities, maps, permit details, and productions that have filmed here.

The IEFC's website had a total of 766,400 hits from more than 237,298 visitors in 2005. That is an average of just over 650 visitors per day.

In the Film Commission's funding strategy is a new plan to offer advertising on the IEFC's website. Already some local hotels have expressed interest, and they could be joined by theme parks, private businesses, film schools, restaurants, and film industry service companies. In the near future, the IEFC's site will also highlight details on film-related events (film festivals, movie screenings, and seminars/tradeshows).



TASK 5: Develop a strategy for tax incentives

The IEFC has been working with a number of individuals in the Coachella Valley to develop local tax incentives that are sustainable regardless of the size of the production. In numerous discussions with Los Angeles based industry professionals, it has become apparent that countywide regional incentives will be difficult to offer. Instead, it was suggested that each city be encouraged to develop incentives that are specific for their city.



The State's Film California First program reimbursed qualified production companies for location fees they incurred while filming/photographing on federal, state, and local public properties in California. Unfortunately, since February 2003, the California Film Commission does not have the funds to administer Film California First. Although the provision for this incentive program remains in the state budget, it is not certain if or when the program will resume.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has expressed his commitment to keeping motion picture production in California. In addition to beefing up the California Film Commission with the appointment of five of his Hollywood brethren, Schwarzenegger also committed himself to doubling the number of entertainment-related jobs in California and continuing the pursuit of tax incentives on both the federal and state levels.

There is currently a tax credit bill (AB777) that was introduced by Assemblyman Nunez that will target the type of productions that are most likely susceptible to following subsidies elsewhere. The IEFC is very much involved with this lobbying efforts.

TASK 6: Maintain and manage a location library

The IEFC continues to add new sites to its location library following the industry standard to sort location sites by categories, not by region. We are limiting the number of photos per location to around four as we feel that it is imperative that we get the location community on the ground in the two-county region. Our on-line library should create an awareness of the diversity of the region and create the need for a producer or director “to see more.” This serves to strengthen the relationships between the Location community and the film commission.

As you can see, the IEFC makes a big difference in the lives of the film community and the Riverside County community. In addition to all of the above, the IEFC has been proactive in assisting local film companies with issues that are not necessarily in their mandate. Here are a few of examples:

- A small non-profit company called *L.A. Circus* provides a free program for at risk kids. They had select children to participate in putting on a circus performance. They fund this program with a circus prop house located in Pedley. *L.A. Circus* is one of the only circus prop houses in the nation. Film crews from all over the world rent their equipment for everything from feature films to still shoots. ALL of the revenue from this company goes to the kids circus program.

Recently, they had some problems with their property in Pedley that would have cost so much that they might have to give up the kids program. Sheri Davis jumped right in, bringing with her key government and business people (all of which helped pro-bono) to solve the issue and to keep the kids program going.

- In Perris there is an elephant farm called *Have Trunk Will Travel*, which provides elephant rides for parades, carnivals, fairs, educational programs and, of course, they also perform in film projects. In the past five years, laws have been proposed, in all levels of government, which would make it difficult or impossible for them to continue business in California. This would have been a travesty to take away the opportunity for children and adults to experience such a beautiful creature up close. Sheri Davis answered her call for help. When AB3027 was

going through the approval process, Sheri Davis drafted a proposal in opposition to the bill, gathered signatures from the other film commissions in California and walked the halls of the Assembly in Sacramento requesting that the film commissions be heard. Shortly thereafter, AB3027 was killed in committee.

- Sheri Davis is on the board, and is Vice-Chair, of the Film Liaisons In California, Statewide (FLICS). This is a non-profit organization of 44 film commissions across the state of California. Through this organization, the IEFC can expand their efforts to keeping filming in California. They are working with other entities to stop “run away filming” to other countries and states so that California will not lose its native industry . . . Filming.

Through all these efforts, the IEFC works hard everyday so that Riverside County can benefit the economic impact that filming can provide.

**Report submitted by Sheri Davis,
Inland Empire Film Commission**