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Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Rm. 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch
Native Plant Program
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Project Title: Facilitation and Study of Western Joshua Tree Regeneration Post-Wildfire (Project)

Project Location: The Project is located at the Portal Ridge Wildlife Preserve (PRWP), a patchwork of approximately 730 acres, 15 miles west of Lancaster, CA in Los Angeles County. PRWP is owned and managed by Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC). Three of the four proposed study areas are adjacent to the Arthur B. Ripley Desert State Park (34.752521, -118.492824) to the north, west, and south. The fourth proposed study area is adjacent to George Bones Wildlife Sanctuary (34.738416, -118.492266) to the south and southwest. Project greenhouse activities will occur at the THC greenhouse facility at 10230 Monterey Court, Oak Hills, CA 92344 in Los Angeles County (34.3738, -117.4408).

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a permit to THC [Permit No. 2081(a)-21-011-RP] pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a project to develop a strategy for responding proactively and reactively to future and past fire events in western Joshua tree woodland (WJT) habitats. Post-fire project activities include: (1) testing methods to protect against herbivore damage to new WJT rhizomal sprouts, (2) WJT seed collection for propagation and outplanting into the proposed study areas, and (3) testing the hypothesis that clustering dead and downed WJT biomass will speed up the regeneration of desert native plants by promoting moisture and seed retention and that biomass may also provide habitat for wildlife.

California Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Samuel Easley, Land Manager, Transition Habitat Conservancy

Exempt Status:

- ☐ Ministerial;
- ☐ Declared Emergency;
- ☐ Emergency Project;
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. Type and section number: Sections 15306 and 15307, Classes 6 and 7

Reasons why project is exempt: The Project will facilitate the recovery of the Candidate Species, western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) by attempting to re-establish individuals of the species after wildfire. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of *Yucca brevifolia* are not negatively impacted.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Raffica La Rosa Area Code/Telephone/ Extension: (916) 206-4502

Signature: DocuSigned by: 36A908313DB6442... *Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager* **Date:** 7/6/2021

☐ Signed by Lead Agency Date Received for filing at OPR: _____