

**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:** Bakersfield Cactus Beard Ranch Population Expansion Project (Project)

**Project Location:** Collection of plant material for the Project will occur northeast of Caliente, California in Kern County along Caliente Creek on Beard Ranch and Tollhouse Ranch (California Natural Diversity Database [CNDDDB] element occurrences [EO] 23, 24, and 69; all in the vicinity of [35.300155, -118.595562]). Pads will be transferred to and planted at the recipient sites at Beard Ranch.

**Project Description:** The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a permit to The Nature Conservancy [Permit No. 2081(a)-21-019-RP] pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a project to expand and establish Bakersfield cactus into unoccupied areas within its current range. The Project includes collecting and preparing pads of Bakersfield cactus and transplanting the pads into 39 acres of unoccupied habitat on Beard Ranch, a property owned by The Nature Conservancy. In January 2022, up to 100 pads will be collected from up to three CNDDDB EOs. Only one terminal pad will be collected from each plant or clump that contains at least 20 pads. Each recipient site where the pads will be planted will be cleared of all vegetation via mechanical methods to reduce competition, and a small hole will be excavated for each pad. Immediately after pad collection, 30-50 of the pads will be placed on the ground at each recipient site for about two weeks until the cut ends are callused over. In January/February 2022, plants will be placed directly in the ground into the prepared holes, watered immediately, and rocks will be placed around plants to increase plant vigor. All planting will occur within newly created pastures that have exclusionary fencing around the perimeter and these pastures will remain ungrazed until plants become well-established (approximately two years). Following the two-year establishment period, cattle will be allowed to seasonally graze the pasture and are expected to effectively reduce non-native weed competition with Bakersfield cactus. Data on the survival, number of pads, and the overall health of each cactus will be monitored annually in the fall for five years.

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

**Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Zachary Principe, The Nature 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 California endangered Bakersfield cactus by attempting to establish additional self-sustaining populations of the species within its historic range and is being undertaken as a research project that will consist of experimental management activities and scientific reporting of results. The activities are expected to have a net conservation benefit and are not expected to result in a serious or major disturbance to any environmental resource. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of Bakersfield cactus are not impacted, and that reintroduced populations are adequately protected.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Raffica La Rosa

Area Code/Telephone/ Extension: (916) 206-4502

**Signature:**   
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*Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager*

**Date:** 12/13/2021

Signed by Lead Agency

Date Received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_