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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: Western Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) Transplanting Pilot Study (Project)

Project Location: The Western Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) Transplanting Pilot Study (Project) will take place in Los Angeles County at Petersen Ranch, located at 13216 Johnson Road, Lake Hughes, CA 93532 (34.65717, -118.36197; 3,228 feet elevation). Planting locations are identified in Figure 1 and Figure 5 of Attachment 1 (Research Proposal dated June 22, 2022). Western Joshua trees used for the pilot experiment will be translocated from the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District (AVRCD) Nursery located at 10148 West Avenue I, Lancaster, CA 93536 (34.70348, -118.31023; 2,359 feet elevation).

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a permit to WRA Inc. [Permit No. 2081(a)-22-002-RP] pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a pilot study project to determine the viability of translocating western Joshua trees (WJT) and examine survivorship just outside the natural range of the species at Petersen Ranch. As climate change is predicted to reduce the range of Joshua trees, translocation to areas with higher elevation and cooler temperatures like Petersen Ranch may provide important data on capacity for range expansion and serve as a strategy for species conservation. Project activities include translocating 27 WJTs that are currently in holding both in-ground and in containers at AVRCD nursery to three planting areas at Petersen Ranch. Survivorship, vigor, number of stems/branches, number of inflorescences, observational occurrences of Yucca moths, and presence or absence of juveniles or seedlings will be monitored annually for three years following transplantation activities.

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

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: WRA Inc.

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 collecting data on viability of translocation and range expansion. 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: Joanne Heraty Area Code/Telephone/ Extension: (916) 594-4574

Signature: DocuSigned by: 36A908313DB6442... *Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager* **Date:** 8/22/2022

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