

**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:** Geysers Panicum (*Panicum acuminatum* var. *thermale*) Monitoring

**Project Location:** The Geysers Panicum (*Panicum acuminatum* var. *thermale*) Monitoring Project (Project) will occur in the Sulphur Creek watershed of Sonoma County at Historic Geysers Resort Area (38.80027, -122.80522), Hot Springs Creek (38.78915, -122.77925), Hot Springs Creek Canyon (38.78808, -122.78211), Sulphur Creek Road 0.3 miles South of Big Sulphur Creek Road (38.78530, -122.77494), United States Geological Survey Bench Mark 2163 (38.78323, -122.77014), Little Geysers Creek (38.77246, -122.75223), Little Geysers (38.77357, -122.74974), Sulphur Bank Drive Area West (38.80721, -122.82615), Sulphur Bank Drive Area Central (38.80594, -122.82299), Sulphur Bank Drive Area East (38.80698, -122.82141), and Sulphur Bank Drive Area Far East (38.80698, -122.82141).

**Project Description:** The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act (CESA) permit to Calpine Corporation (Permit No. 2081(a)-23-007-RP) pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a project to extend long-term monitoring of Geysers panicum required by the California Energy Commission (CEC) for Geysers Geothermal Power Plant Unit 20 (Unit 20). At three or four-year intervals, beginning in 2023, a qualified biologist will visit all project occurrences of Geysers panicum. Field visits will be made in August or September at the end of the growing season to assess: (1) the extent and activity of surface geothermal features, (2) apparent threats to Geysers panicum populations, if any, (3) new invasive plant patches along roadsides or within populations, (4) occurrence of significant land use changes or incidents in the vicinity of the populations, and (5) general status of Geysers panicum populations. A pilot project will be implemented in 2023 to utilize unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) to monitor Geysers panicum at three populations that are inaccessible due to highly erodible slopes. A field level survey will be conducted during the first year of the pilot project to compare and verify UAV habitat assessment accuracy. If UAV monitoring proves successful for accurate habitat assessments, implementation may be considered for monitoring all populations during the term of this permit to limit habitat disturbance.

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

**Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Peggie King, Calpine Corporation

**Exempt Status:**

- Ministerial;
- Declared Emergency;
- Emergency Project;
- Categorical Exemption. Type and section number: Section 15306, Class 6

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The Project consists of basic monitoring and data collection that will expand understanding of the habitat requirements of Geysers panicum and track the species' persistence. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure the existing populations of Geysers panicum are not impacted by monitoring activities.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Joanne Heraty

Area Code/Telephone/ Extension: (916) 594-4574

**Signature:** DocuSigned by:  
Elliot Chasin for  
Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager **Date:** 8/3/2023

Signed by Lead Agency Date Received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_