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: Assessing Impacts of Drought and Woody Debris on North Coast Semaphore Grass (*Pleuropogon hooverianus*) (Project)

Project Location: The Project will take place at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt greenhouse facilities in Humboldt County, California.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act (CESA) permit to Dr. Justin Luong (Permit No. 2081(a)-23-018-RP) pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a project to investigate how North Coast semaphore grass responds to drought with and without the presence of woody debris in a controlled greenhouse experiment to inform adaptive management strategies and aid recovery efforts. Seeds collected on June 7, 2023, by Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) under authority of CESA permit 2081(a)-19-006-RP will be transferred to the Permittee in December 2023. Seeds will be germinated in trays with potting mix and transferred to four-liter containers once established. A total of 32 containers are expected to be propagated for the experiment. The following simulated treatments will be applied four weeks after an initial growth period: (1) control; (2) drought only; (3) woody debris only; and (4) woody debris and drought. Plants receiving the drought treatment will experience a sequence of episodic drought for four weeks, followed by watering for two weeks, followed by drought conditions for another four weeks before final data collection. Wooden dowels will be added to the soil surface of plants receiving the woody debris treatments to better understand impacts of mimicked woody debris on soil moisture and development of North Coast semaphore grass. Following the experiment, two individuals from each treatment will be harvested and sampled for leaf traits (mass and area). Aboveground biomass will be oven dried and measured for total mass. Belowground roots will be washed, oven dried, and measured for total mass. Seed production, survival, weekly soil moisture, and morphological trait data (e.g., plant height, basal circumference, leaf area, and leaf dry matter content) will also be recorded. Following the greenhouse experiment, seeds will be collected and returned to MCRCD in 2024 to be broadcast at the site from which they were collected.

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

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Dr. Justin Luong, Assistant Professor of Rangeland Management, California Polytechnic State University, Humboldt

Exempt Status:

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

Reasons why project is exempt: The Project consists of basic data collection and research activities to inform adaptive management strategies and aid recovery efforts of *Pleuropogon hooverianus*. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of *Pleuropogon hooverianus* are not impacted.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Joanne Heraty Area Code/Telephone/ Extension: (916) 594-4574

Signature: DocuSigned by: 36A908313DB6442... **Date:** 12/18/2023

Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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