

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 (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*) Restoration at Panofsky-Wilson Preserve (Project)

Project Location: The Project will take place at the Panofsky-Wilson Preserve located in Kern County, CA (35.29192, -118.63804). Bakersfield cactus source material will be collected from a Tejon Ranch population located in Caliente Creek, adjacent to Bena Road (35.32446, -118.72408).

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act permit to Tejon Ranch Conservancy (Permit No. 2081(a)-23-017-RP) pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) for a project to collect Bakersfield cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*) pads to transplant and restore a healthy cactus population on the Panofsky-Wilson Preserve that was impacted by a 2019 grass fire. Approximately 100 Bakersfield cactus terminal pads will be collected in the fall of 2024 from a population located approximately four miles west of the Preserve in Caliente Creek adjacent to Bena Road within the Tejon Ranch Conservation Easement Area. Bakersfield cactus pads will be transplanted into a 10-acre upland area on the Panofsky-Wilson Preserve. Pads will be evenly dispersed among 20 one-meter by one-meter square plots. Accumulated thatch will be removed, and the top few centimeters of soil will be loosened prior to transplanting. Plots will be monitored at least once a month for the duration of the permit to determine weed management needs and each plot will be hand weeded to control the density of non-native grass if necessary. The Permittee will conduct a supplemental summer water experiment on half of the plots to determine the efficacy of water treatment during Bakersfield cactus establishment. Ten random plots will receive supplemental water treatment at least once during each of the first two summers following planting. Supplemental water will also be applied to treatment plots in the winter in any month that does not receive at least ¼ inch of natural rainfall during the month. Data on survivorship, number of pads, height of tallest living point, and health status of each clump will be collected annually in the fall for five years. Observations on flower production and fungal growth will also be noted. A photo of each plot will be taken to record changes in shape and appearance over time.

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

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Mitchell Coleman, Conservation Science Director, Tejon Ranch Conservancy

Exempt Status:

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

Reasons why project is exempt: The Project consists of experimental management and resource evaluation activities to ensure the maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of an existing population of Bakersfield cactus. 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 adequately protected.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Joanne Heraty

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

Signature:  _____ **Date:** 7/2/2024
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Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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