

## Notice of Exemption

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**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:** Mojave Desert Land Trust Activities Involving Western Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) (Project)

**Project Location:** The Project will take place in San Bernardino and Kern counties on several properties owned by Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT). Seed processing, storage, and propagation will occur at MDLT headquarters in Joshua Tree, San Bernardino County.

**Project Description:** The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a permit to MDLT (Permit No. 2081(a)-24-010-RP) pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081(a) for a project to: (1) preserve genetic diversity of western Joshua tree (WJT) populations; (2) build an inventory of seed and plants that can be used for research, restoration, and recovery efforts; (3) collect, maintain, and share data on the long-term viability of WJT seeds; and (4) minimize habitat disturbance by vertically mulching dead and detached WJT limbs. Seed collection is expected to take place following a mast seeding event, which does not happen every year. Fruit collection will typically occur between June and August. Fruit will be carefully dislodged from trees and will be temporarily stored in paper bags. Each collection will be given a unique accession number. Information including latitude and longitude, population size, number of individuals sampled, and associate species will also be recorded. Collected seed will be processed at MDLT headquarters. Fruits will be spread out on screens or left in open paper bags to air dry for a minimum of two weeks. Fruits will then be cleaned to remove chaff using sieves and a seed blower. Collected seed will be stored in air-tight containers in refrigerators. An estimated 10,000-20,000 seeds per collection may be dried, sealed in foil packets and stored in cold storage for long term conservation purposes. Germination testing will be conducted on each collection. Approximately 20-50 seeds will be germinated and data on number of seeds that germinate, and percent viability will be recorded. Seeds that germinate may be transplanted into pots with sterilized growth medium and housed in a shaded greenhouse at the MDLT nursery to be irrigated regularly and used for conservation and recovery purposes. MDLT will also use dead and detached WJT limbs to construct vertical mulch piles to block access to, obscure, and restore denuded and compacted areas caused by unauthorized vehicle or foot traffic.

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

**Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Patrick Emblidge, Seed Program Manager, MDLT

**Exempt Status:**

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

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The Project consists of basic research, data collection, and management activities to aid conservation and recovery efforts of western Joshua tree. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of western Joshua tree are adequately protected.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Joanne Heraty

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

**Signature:**  \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** 10/7/2024  
36A908313DB6442  
Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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