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: Indian Knob Mountainbalm (*Eriodictyon altissimum*) Conservation Seed Banking (Project)

Project Location: The Project will take place at six Indian Knob mountainbalm locations in San Luis Obispo County: (1) Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve (California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) Element Occurrences 1 and 6); (2) Montaña de Oro State Park (CNDDB Element Occurrences 2 and 3); (3) Balm Ridge (CNDDB Element Occurrence 5); and (4) Davenport Creek Road (CNDDB Element Occurrence 5). Collected seed will be stored at California Botanic Garden (34.11078, -117.71513) in Claremont, Los Angeles County, and at the National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation (40.57301, -105.07964) in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act and Native Plant Protection Act permit pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) to the California Native Plant Society (Permit No. 2081(a)-25-001-RP) for a project to collect Indian Knob mountainbalm seed and voucher specimens for conservation seed banking and research purposes. Project activities are expected to begin in the spring of 2025 and continue through 2027. Seed collection will target Indian Knob mountainbalm populations that have a minimum of 50 individuals when possible. The goal is to collect up to 3,000 viable seeds with no more than ten percent of the total seed produced to be collected within any given year. Each maternal plant's seeds will be collected and stored separately to maintain genetic lineages. For smaller populations with fewer than 100 individuals, methods will be adjusted to collect up to ten percent of seeds from each reproductive individual, and to implement multi-year collection strategies to build adequate samples while minimizing impact on the population. One voucher specimen will be collected from each collection site to be deposited at a Consortium of California Herbaria institution. Collected seed will be transferred to California Botanic Garden for long term conservation storage and backup samples will be sent to the National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation. Population data including mapping, monitoring, and photographic documentation will be submitted to CNDDB.

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

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Kristen Nelson, Rare Plant Program Manager, California Native Plant Society

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 research and data collection activities to assist conservation efforts of Indian Knob mountainbalm. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of Indian Knob mountainbalm are adequately protected.

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

Signature: DocuSigned by: 36A908313DB6442... **Date:** 2/24/2025

Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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