

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: Chorro Creek Bog Thistle (*Cirsium fontinale* var. *obispoense*) Seed Dispersal Study (Project)

Project Location: The Project will take place in San Luis Obispo County at Laguna Lake Natural Reserve (California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) Element Occurrence (EO) 2; 35.26733, -120.68383). Seed will be temporarily stored at the Permittee's laboratory facilities at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (35.30210, -120.65935).

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act permit pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) to Dr. Nishanta Rajakaruna (Permit No. 2081(a)-25-007-RP) for a project to evaluate wind-based seed dispersal distance and patterns of Chorro Creek bog thistle by deploying seed traps along transects radiating from the existing Chorro Creek bog thistle colony at Laguna Lake Natural Reserve Park, as well as within a nearby seep from which the taxon was recently extirpated. Project activities are expected to take place between April and December of 2025. Customized seed traps will be installed in the ground along six radial transects extending from the edge of the existing Chorro Creek bog thistle colony. Trap placements will occur at 0.5, 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, and 16 meters from the colony source. An additional six seed traps will be set in a nearby fenced seep where Chorro Creek bog thistle was recently extirpated to monitor potential seed movement into currently unoccupied habitat. Traps will remain open for a period of 14 days each month from April to December 2025. At the end of the 14 day period, seed will be collected from the traps, the traps will be closed for approximately 14 days, and seed will be transported to California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo to be counted and temporarily stored in a paper bag within a climate-controlled room. All seeds will be returned to within one meter of the seed trap they were collected from in December of 2025. Seed trap data will be used to estimate average dispersal distances and the probability of seed movement across various distances. Results will inform the development of dispersal models and help assess the potential for recolonization. Findings will be incorporated into species distribution models to project future distribution of the species under various climate change scenarios.

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

Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Dr. Nishanta Rajakaruna, Professor, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Exempt Status:

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

Reasons why project is exempt: The Project will support the recovery of the state and federally endangered Chorro Creek bog thistle by evaluating its seed dispersal mechanisms to inform future conservation actions. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of Chorro Creek bog thistle are adequately protected.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Joanne Heraty

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

Signature:  _____ **Date:** 4/10/2025
36A908313DB6442
Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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