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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
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July 7, 2025

Gina Dorrington
City of San Buenaventura
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SUBJECT: FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE VENTURA WATER SUPPLY PROJECT, ADDENDUMS NO. 1 AND NO. 2; SCH NO. 2017111004; VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Dear Gina Dorrington:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed Addendums No. 1 and No. 2 to the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from the City of San Buenaventura (City) for the Ventura Water Supply Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines¹.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding Project activities that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Fish & G. Code, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW may also act as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law² of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) or the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA; Fish & G. Code, §1900 et seq.), the Project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: City of San Buenaventura

Objective: According to the EIR, the Project objective is to protect the ecology of the Santa Clara River Estuary (SCRE), develop additional water supply sources to meet water demands for planned future growth, and enhance supply reliability. The Project would divert approximately 4.7 million gallons per day (mgd) of tertiary treated water to a new advanced water purification facility (AWPF) for additional treatment and to provide a new potable water supply, with flows continued to protect the ecology of the SCRE. The first phase (Phase 1a) would reduce discharges to the SCRE to an average annual rate of 1.9 mgd. The second phase (Phase 1b) would further reduce discharges to the SCRE to an average annual rate of 0-0.5 mgd. Additionally, the treated product water from the AWPF will be injected into local groundwater basins before distribution to the water system and/or distributed directly, through the water distribution system. The purpose of Addendums No. 1 and No. 2 is to describe and evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed modifications to the Project.

Addendum No. 1 addresses modifications to the water conveyance system, Ventura Wastewater Reclamation Facility (VWRF) treatment upgrades, groundwater wells, and a concentrate discharge facility. Addendum No. 2 addresses the AWPF in more depth and includes mitigation measures for aesthetic; cultural resources; geology, soils, and seismicity; noise; and transportation and traffic. A more thorough description of the Project changes, as described in Addendum No. 1 is detailed below.

Water Conveyance System: Several miles of pipelines are proposed to convey source water, product water, and wastewater. New pump stations will be constructed at the AWPF, VWRF, and groundwater well sites. The addendum includes a length reduction of the water conveyance system route of the onshore route and includes a pipeline under the Arundell Barranca channel of the Ventura Harbor to Marina Park. The revised route allows for two 8-inch sewer pipes that will replace an existing 12-inch cast iron pipeline.

² "Take" is defined in Section 86 of the Fish and Game Code as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill."

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Ventura Wastewater Reclamation Facility Treatment Upgrades: Additional nitrogen treatment facilities are proposed to be constructed to meet discharge water quality objectives for the SCRE. A Membrane Bioreactor treatment has been selected as the treatment upgrade/process since the EIR was certified. The upgrade will provide advanced levels of nutrient removal and will be constructed on the existing VWRf property. Treatment upgrades may include the addition of aeration blowers, primary treatment improvements, filter replacements, and other system upgrades.

Groundwater Wells: Up to six wells at the three prospective sites are proposed to be installed within the Oxnard Plain Basin. The wells will be constructed in the Oxnard Aquifer to a depth of approximately 250 feet. Each well will have the capacity to inject/extract between 1,250-2,750 gallons per minute into and out of the Oxnard Plain Groundwater Basin.

Concentrate Discharge Facility: A new ocean outfall, located just north of the Ventura Harbor, will be installed to discharge reverse-osmosis concentrated waste from the AWPf treatment process, along with some tertiary treated flows that exceed AWPf capacity. Additionally, a diffuser will be installed at the end of the outfall with discharge portals to maximize efficient dilution. Addendum No. 1 includes a modification to the location of the concentrate conveyance pipeline, which will shorten the overall length by approximately 4,700 feet. The Project initially proposed the pipeline alignment following Harbor Boulevard to Peninsula Street to Pierpoint Boulevard and finally to Marina Park. The modified route will be from Harbor Boulevard to Schooner Drive to Anchors Way, and under the Arundell Barranca channel of the Ventura Harbor to Marina Park.

Location: The Project location, as analyzed in the EIR, includes the cities of Ventura, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme, in Ventura County. The VWRf currently discharges recycled water into the SCRE, and several pipelines will cross the following drainages: the Santa Clara River, Arundell-Barranca, Brown Barranca, Harmon Barranca, and Bubbling Springs. Addendum No. 2 discloses that the AWPf will be located on the corner of Harbor Boulevard and Olivas Park Drive. The conveyance pipeline alignment, included in Addendum No. 1, occurs at the horizontal directional drilling site on Greenock Lane. The pipeline continues in a southeast direction within Anchors Way, turns east just south of Navigator Road to Harbor Boulevard, where it travels south to Spinnaker Road, and heads southwest to the entrance at the VWRf.

Timeframe: The entire construction of the Ventura Water Pure Project will take approximately three to five years and will occur in two phases (described above).

Project History: CDFW previously submitted comments in response to the City's NOP, Draft EIR, and EIR for this Project. CDFW also continues to attend quarterly meetings with the City, resource agencies, and local groups and organizations to discuss surveys and results for this Project.

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COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the City in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

COMMENT # 1: Impacts to Crotch's Bumble Bee (*Bombus crotchii*)

Issue: The Project may impact suitable nesting and foraging habitat for Crotch's bumble bee. Neither addendum evaluated impacts to this species nor did the EIR analyze the full Project area for this species, and no mitigation measures were provided to avoid impacts to this species. Crotch's bumble bee is a candidate species protected under CESA, and, as such, is granted full protection under CESA.

Specific impact: The Project may result in temporary and permanent impacts due to loss of suitable nesting and foraging habitat of Crotch's bumble bee.

Why impact would occur: According to CDFW's Crotch's Bumble Bee Range – CDFW dataset (CDFWa), the Project area lies within the current range for Crotch's bumble bee. Grassland habitat within the Project area may provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat that was not fully considered in the EIR or the Addendums to support Crotch's bumble bee (CDFW 2025b). Crotch's bumble bees primarily nest from late February through late October and typically nest underground in abandoned small mammal burrows. However, they may also nest under perennial bunch grasses, thatched annual grasses, under-brush piles, in old bird nests, and in dead trees or hollow logs (Williams et al. 2014; Hatfield et al. 2012).

Given that the Project site is in the current range and contains potentially suitable habitat, there is a reasonable potential for this CESA candidate species to be present. The EIR was finalized prior to Crotch's bumble bee's listing as a candidate species under CESA so no mitigation measures were incorporated in the EIR. If the Project proceeds without appropriate focused surveys and mitigation, the Project may result in mortality and/or injury of undetected individual Crotch's bumble bee that may be present during Project activities. The Project's ground and/or vegetation disturbance activities could result in potentially significant impacts to Crotch's bumble bee, including loss of foraging resources, changes in foraging behavior, burrow collapse, nest abandonment, reduced nest success, reduced health and vigor of eggs, young, and/or queens, and direct mortality.

Evidence impact may be significant: The California Fish and Game Commission accepted a petition to list the Crotch's bumble bee as endangered under CESA, determining the listing "may be warranted" and advancing the species to the candidacy stage of the CESA listing process. Take of any endangered, threatened, candidate species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by State law (Fish & G. Code, §§ 86, 2062, 2067, 2068, 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 786.9). CDFW considers impacts to species that are candidates for CESA listing to be

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significant, under CEQA. Accordingly, the Project may have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #1: Crotch's Bumble Bee

The Project should consider the potential direct and indirect impacts on Crotch's bumble bee throughout the entire Project area. If the Project may impact Crotch's bumble bee, the EIR should incorporate measures to minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts to Crotch's bumble bee as well as habitat supporting the species. The discussion should be of a depth and scope that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) can be issued based on the analysis provided in the final document.

Recommendation #2: CESA and CEQA

CDFW's issuance of an ITP for a Project is subject to CEQA. As a Responsible Agency, CDFW may consider the CEQA document from the lead agency/Project proponent for the Project. However, additional documentation may be required as part of an ITP application for the Project in order for CDFW to adequately develop an accurate take analysis and identify measures that would fully mitigate for take of CESA-listed species. To minimize additional requirements by CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 and/or under CEQA, the Project's CEQA document should fully identify the potential impacts to Crotch's bumble bee and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, monitoring, and reporting commitments for issuance of the ITP.

Mitigation Measure #1: Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys

The Project proponent shall retain a qualified entomologist(s) with the appropriate handling permits to conduct focused surveys. Focused surveys shall follow CDFW's Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species (CDFW 2023). Focused surveys shall also be conducted throughout the entire Project area and during the appropriate flying season to ensure no missed detection of Crotch's bumble bee occurs. Survey results, including negative findings, shall be submitted to CDFW prior to implementing Project ground-disturbing and/or vegetation removal activities.

Mitigation Measure #2: Incidental Take Permit

If Crotch's bumble bee is detected on site, the Project proponent shall coordinate with CDFW to determine next steps and whether appropriate take authorization from CDFW is necessary (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq).

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COMMENT # 2: Impacts to Western Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Issue #1: The Project has the potential to impact wintering habitat of western burrowing owl, a CESA candidate species, particularly within the proposed AWPf site and other areas that were not specifically analyzed for this Project.

Specific impact: The Project may result in the loss of wintering habitat for western burrowing owl due to the construction of the AWPf. Although the EIR analyzed impacts to western burrowing owl, that analysis focused on the SCRE and did not evaluate the AWPf site or other parts of the Project area that may provide suitable wintering habitat or foraging habitat for the species. Western burrowing owl became a candidate species under CESA after the EIR was finalized and is therefore granted full protection under CESA.

Why impact would occur: According to CDFW's Western Burrowing Owl Range (CDFWc), the Project area lies within the current range for western burrowing owl, and specifically wintering habitat. Burrowing owls are well adapted to open, dry annual and perennial grasslands, deserts, and scrublands with low-grading vegetation. They can be found on relatively flat expanses and vacant lots such as the site for the AWPf. Burrowing owls are dependent on burrow at all times of the year for survival and/or reproduction. Loss of access to burrows may likely results in varying levels of increased stress on burrowing owls and could increase predation.

Evidence impact would be significant: On October 10, 2024, the California Fish and Game Commission determined that listing of western burrowing owl as endangered as a candidate CESA species was warranted. If Project activities could result in take, appropriate CESA authorization (i.e., Incidental Take Permit under Fish and Game Code section 2081) should be obtained prior to commencement of Project activities. Take of any endangered, threatened, or candidate species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by State law (Fish & G. Code, §§ 86, 2062, 2067, 2068, 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 786.9). Take of individual burrowing owls and their nests is defined by Fish and Game Code section 86, and prohibited by sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3513.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #3: Western Burrowing Owl

CDFW recommends that the addendums evaluate the direct and indirect impacts to burrowing owl within the proposed AWPf site and any other Project areas that may provide suitable habitat. The addendums should incorporate measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts to western burrowing owl as well as its habitat.

Mitigation Measure #3: Western Burrowing Owl Surveys

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Protocol-level surveys shall be conducted by a CDFW-approved Designated Biologist, following the guidelines in CDFW's Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012) prior to ground disturbance and/or vegetation removal activities. All biologists surveying and/or monitoring for burrowing owl shall obtain a Scientific Collecting Permit³ issued by CDFW. Early consultation with CDFW is encouraged to ensure all necessary permits are obtained.

Mitigation Measure #4: Incidental Take Permit

If Project activities will impact western burrowing owl and their habitat, the Project proponent shall coordinate with CDFW to determine next steps and whether appropriate take authorization from CDFW is necessary (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Plan. CDFW recommends the environmental document include mitigation measures recommended in this letter. CDFW has provided comments via a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan to assist in the development of feasible, specific, detailed (i.e., responsible party, timing, specific actions, location), and fully enforceable mitigation measures (CEQA Guidelines, § 15097; Pub. Resources Code, § 21081.6). The City is welcome to coordinate with CDFW to further review and refine the Project's mitigation measures. Per Public Resources Code section 21081.6(a)(1), CDFW has provided a summary of our suggested mitigation measures and recommendations in the form of an attached Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Attachment A).

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The [CNDDDB website](#)⁴ provides direction regarding the types of information that should be reported and allows on-line submittal of field survey forms.

In addition, information on special status native plant populations and sensitive natural communities, should be submitted to CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program using the [Combined Rapid Assessment and Relevé Form](#)⁵.

³ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Scientific-Collecting>

⁴ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB>

⁵ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities/Submit>

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The City should ensure that any data collected for the Addendums or the EIR is properly submitted.

FILING FEES

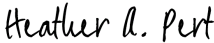
The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the EIR addendums to assist the City in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW requests an opportunity to review and comment on any response that the City has to our comments and to receive notification of any forthcoming hearing date(s) for the Project (CEQA Guidelines, § 15073(e)).

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Mayra Molina, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)⁶.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Heather A. Pert
Environmental Program Manager
South Coast Region

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program

ec: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Heather Pert, Environmental Program Manager
Baron Barrera, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)
Mayra Molina, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Christine Medak

⁶ Phone: (562) 723-8734; Email: Mayra.Molina@wildlife.ca.gov

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National Marine Fisheries Service
Brittany Struck

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REFERENCES

[CDFW] California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 2012. Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation. Available at:

<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83843>

[CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2023. Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Candidate Bumble Bee Species. Available from: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=213150&inline>

[CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025a. Crotch's Bumble Bee Range Dataset 3095. Available at CDFW's Biogeographic Information and Observation System, <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>

[CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025b. California Natural Diversity Database. Available from: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB>

[CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025c. Western Burrowing Owl Range Dataset 907. Available at CDFW's Biogeographic Information and Observation System, <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>

Hatfield, R, S Jepsen, E Mader, S H Black, and M Shepherd. 2012. Conserving Bumble Bees Guidelines for Creating and Managing Habitat for America's Declining Pollinators. Portland, OR: The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

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ATTACHMENT A: DRAFT MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM (MMRP)

CDFW provides the following language to be incorporated into the MMRP for the Project.

Mitigation Measure	Timing	Responsible Party
<p>Recommendation #1: Crotch’s Bumble Bee</p> <p>The Project should consider the potential direct and indirect impacts on Crotch’s bumble bee throughout the entire Project area. If the Project may impact Crotch’s bumble bee, the EIR should incorporate measures to minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts to Crotch’s bumble bee as well as habitat supporting the species. The discussion should be of a depth and scope that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) can be issued based on the analysis provided in the final document.</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: CESA and CEQA</p> <p>CDFW’s issuance of an ITP for a Project is subject to CEQA. As a Responsible Agency, CDFW may consider the CEQA document from the lead agency/Project proponent for the Project. However, additional documentation may be required as part of an ITP application for the Project in order for CDFW to adequately develop an accurate take analysis and identify measures that would fully mitigate for take of CESA-listed species. To minimize additional requirements by CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 and/or under CEQA, the Project’s CEQA document should fully identify the potential impacts to Crotch’s bumble bee and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, monitoring, and reporting commitments for issuance of the ITP.</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>

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Mitigation Measure	Timing	Responsible Party
<p>Mitigation Measure #1: Crotch’s Bumble Bee Surveys</p> <p>The Project proponent shall retain a qualified entomologist(s) with the appropriate handling permits to conduct focused surveys. Focused surveys shall follow CDFW’s Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species (CDFW 2023). Focused surveys shall also be conducted throughout the entire Project area and during the appropriate flying season to ensure no missed detection of Crotch’s bumble bee occurs. Survey results, including negative findings, shall be submitted to CDFW prior to implementing Project ground-disturbing and/or vegetation removal activities.</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation/During Project Construction</p>	<p>Lead Agency/Designated Biologist</p>
<p>Mitigation Measure #2: Incidental Take Permit</p> <p>If Crotch’s bumble bee is detected on site, the Project proponent shall coordinate with CDFW to determine next steps and whether appropriate take authorization from CDFW is necessary (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq).</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>
<p>Recommendation #3: Western Burrowing Owl</p> <p>CDFW recommends that the addendums evaluate the direct and indirect impacts to burrowing owl within the proposed AWPf site and any other Project areas that may provide suitable habitat. The addendums should incorporate measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts to western burrowing owl as well as its habitat.</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>
<p>Mitigation Measure #3: Western Burrowing Owl Surveys</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation/During</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>

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Mitigation Measure	Timing	Responsible Party
<p>Protocol-level surveys shall be conducted by a CDFW-approved Designated Biologist, following the guidelines in CDFW’s Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012) prior to ground disturbance and/or vegetation removal activities. All biologists surveying and/or monitoring for burrowing owl shall obtain a Scientific Collecting Permit⁷ issued by CDFW. Early consultation with CDFW is encouraged to ensure all necessary permits are obtained.</p>	<p>Project Construction</p>	
<p>Mitigation Measure #4: Incidental Take Permit</p> <p>If Project activities will impact western burrowing owl and their habitat, the Project proponent shall coordinate with CDFW to determine next steps and whether appropriate take authorization from CDFW is necessary (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq).</p>	<p>Prior to Project Initiation</p>	<p>Lead Agency</p>

⁷ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Scientific-Collecting>