

## 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:** Population Genetics of Algodones Dunes Sunflower (*Helianthus niveus* ssp. *tephrodes*) (Project)

**Project Location:** The Project will take place in portions of San Diego, Imperial, and Riverside Counties within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (ABDSP) and at several locations within the Imperial Valley. The Project will revisit past collection sites listed in the USDA National Germplasm System (NPGS)/Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN) database. DNA extraction and sequencing will be conducted at the University of California Riverside (UCR).

**Project Description:** The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing a California Endangered Species Act and Native Plant Protect Act permit pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(a) to Theodore Reitman (Permit No. 2081(a)-25-005-RP) for a project to investigate the genetic diversity, population structure, inbreeding coefficient, and phenotypic variation of Algodones Dunes sunflower to identify genomic regions underlying dune adaptation and determine which populations are of critical conservation importance. Field surveys and collection activities are expected to take place between June and November in 2025. The Permittee will collaborate with ABDSP staff to identify populations of Algodones Dunes sunflower within the park that are appropriate for tissue, seed, and soil collection. The Permittee will also survey previously collected accession locations from the Imperial Valley identified in the NPGS/GRIN database and may survey for additional populations within a 10 mile radius of known accessions. One whole leaf will be collected from up to thirty individuals at each population. Leaf tissue will be transferred to UCR for DNA extraction and whole-genome sequencing analysis. The amount of seed collected will vary depending on the number of flowering individuals, and seed set will be approximated by counting the number of open flower heads per population. Seeds will be separated from the radial discs, placed in coin envelopes, and stored in plastic storage boxes at room temperature in a dry lab at UCR. All unused wild collected seed will be returned to the location they were collected from once the project is complete. Three soil samples will also be collected at each population using a 2.5 cm x 30.5 cm soil core. Vegetation cover will be quantified at each population using a 1 m x 1 m square quadrat. Six seeds from each individual collected will be propagated in a UCR lath house beginning in the spring of 2026 to collect data on phenology, branch architecture, and seed size.

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

**Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Theodore Reitman, Ph.D. student, UCR

**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 data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities which will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Project includes measures to ensure that existing populations of Algodones Dunes sunflower are not impacted.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Joanne Heraty

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

**Signature:**  \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** 5/28/2025  
36A908313DB6442  
Isabel Baer, Native Plant Program Manager

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