

To: Office of Planning and Research
 PO Box 3044
 1400 Tenth Street, Room 113
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Energy Commission
 715 P Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Applicant: The Regents of the University of California

Project Title: Stacking Ecological and Technological Benefits at Large, Ground-Mounted Photovoltaic Solar Parks: Enhancing Soil Carbon Sequestration, Biodiversity, and Photovoltaic Panel Performance

Project Location:

Address	City	County
505 Hutchison Drive	Davis 95616	Yolo
1 Shields Ave	Davis 95616	Yolo

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This research will investigate how ground photovoltaic (GPV) infrastructure influences below-ground processes, particularly soil carbon sequestration, and its relationship with native plant productivity and fossorial animal habitat utilization. By informing land management and integrating ecological restoration, this work aims to enhance soil health, biodiversity, and sustainable energy production for mutual ecosystem and climate benefits.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Energy Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: The Regents of the University of California

Exempt Status: *(check one)*

- Ministerial Exemption (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number

Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15306

California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306, provides that projects which consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource are categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA. The purpose of this Agreement is to research how ground photovoltaic (GPV) infrastructure influences below-ground processes, particularly soil carbon sequestration, and its relationship with native plant productivity and fossorial animal habitat utilization. Thus, this project involves basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental source, and therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under section 15306.

Additionally, this project does not involve impacts on any particularly sensitive environment; does not involve any cumulative impacts of successive projects of the same type in the same place that might be considered significant; does not involve unusual circumstances that might have a significant effect on the environment; will not result in damage to scenic resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; the project site is not included on any

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

list compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5; and the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, none of the exceptions to categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2.

Statutory Exemptions. State code number.

Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15061(b)(3))

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is focused on paper research with some field data collection and stakeholder engagement. There is no alteration of the physical environment within this project.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Julia Harnad **Area code/Telephone/Ext:** 916-477-1302

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: J. Harnad **Date:** 07/14/25 **Title:** Sustainable Energy Specialist

Signed by Public Agency

Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: _____