

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: Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council

Project Title: Adaptively Managed Translocation and Propagation of Mohave Ground Squirrels

Project Location – Specific: 47900 Portola Ave

Project Location – City: Palm Desert, 92260 **Project Location – County:** Riverside

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is focused on paper and zoological research that will develop adaptively managed translocation and propagation programs for the Mohave Ground Squirrel (MGS), a State-threatened and petitioned Endangered Species Act species that is affected by renewable energy development. The protocols produced by this project will inform the effective relocation of this at-risk species from solar energy facilities in the Mojave Desert, minimizing the biological impact of these facilities. Further, these protocols will provide the most technologically advanced and modern methods of relocating ground squirrels to ensure their continued survival, which will mitigate the environmental impacts of clean energy deployments in California. This project will support more streamlined renewable energy development in the deserts of California.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Energy Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council

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
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number.
- ☐ Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15061(b)(3))

Reasons why project is exempt:

Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15306; The project fits under this exemption because it involves science-based capture of a State-threatened species from the desert and will focus on zoological work developing husbandry and propagation protocols in a laboratory setting. The project 1) Consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities, 2) Which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

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:** 7/15/2025 **Title:** Energy Commission Specialist II

☒ **Signed by Public Agency**

☐ **Signed by Applicant**

Date received for filing at OPR: _____