

Notice of Exemption

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To:
Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
[CEQA Submit](#)

From:
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710



Street Address:
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Title: UC Merced Barn Pond Hydrologic Restoration Project (Request No. 1652-2026-086-001-R4)

Project Applicant: University of California, Merced (UC Merced), represented by Daniel Okoli

Project Location (Merced County): The Project is located on the Merced Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve, north of the UC Merced campus, in the City of Merced, Merced County, California; centered at approximately 37.37703, -120.41014; Section 26, Township 6 South, Range 14 East; U.S. Geological Survey map Yosemite Lake; Assessor's Parcel Number 170-220-024-000. The Project will occur within and adjacent to Barn Pond, a lake that overflows into an unnamed ephemeral stream, which drains to the Le Grand Canal.

Project Description: Pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1652, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has approved the UC Merced Barn Pond Hydrologic Restoration Project submitted by UC Merced. The primary purpose of the Project is to reduce the hydroperiod of Barn Pond to support breeding California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) a species designated as threatened pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.), and California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) (See Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 670.5, subd. (b)(3)(G).).

Project activities include the following: installation of gate valve infrastructure on the southern bank of Barn Pond; ongoing operation of gate valve infrastructure; maintenance of gate valve infrastructure; monitoring; and adaptive management.

The Project will allow UC Merced to adaptively manage the hydroperiod of Barn Pond, to achieve a minimum 30-day dry-down period. That dry down period is essential to the control of American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) and mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*) onsite. The Project will also provide incidental enhancement to a downstream complex of vernal pools and swales and will establish a suitable germination period for Colusa grass (*Neostapfia colusana*), a species designated as threatened pursuant to the ESA and endangered pursuant to CESA (See Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 670.2, subd. (a)(26)(A).).

Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

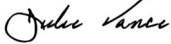
Person or Public Agency Carrying Out Project: UC Merced

Exempt Status:

Categorical Exemption. Type – Class 33 California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15333

Reasons why project is exempt: Class 33 consists of small projects not to exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife.

CDFW Contact Person: Megan Rooney, Environmental Scientist, (559) 203-2792 or megan.rooney@wildlife.ca.gov

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Signature: _____
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Date: 2/18/2026

Julie A. Vance, Regional Manager
Central Region

Date received for filing at OPR: _____