

Section 749.11 Title 14, CCR, is added to read:

749.11 Special Order Relating to Take of Western Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) During Candidacy Period.

The commission authorizes the take of western Joshua tree during the candidacy period for each of the activities described in this section, subject to the terms and conditions specified for each activity.

(a) Definitions.

(1) Desert native plant specialist means:

(A) An arborist certified by the International Society of Arborists; or

(B) An individual with a four-year college degree in ecology or fish and wildlife related biological science from an accredited college and at least two years of professional experience with relocation or restoration of native California desert vegetation; or

(C) An individual with at least five years of professional experience with relocation or restoration of native California desert vegetation.

(2) Western Joshua tree means an individual western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) that has emerged from the ground, regardless of age or size, including all stems that have emerged from the ground within a one-meter radius measured from a single point at the base of the largest stem.

(b) The department may issue a permit to authorize either the removal of a dead western Joshua tree or the trimming of a western Joshua tree. The project proponent or its agent may remove a detached dead western Joshua tree or detached limb of a western Joshua tree. All other removals and all trimming of western Joshua trees authorized by permits issued pursuant to this subsection shall be completed by a desert native plant specialist. The department may issue permits pursuant to this subsection, without payment of mitigation fees or other mitigation, provided that the dead western Joshua tree or any limb(s) to be removed:

(1) Has fallen over and is within 30 feet of a structure; or

(2) Is leaning against an existing structure; or

(3) Creates an imminent threat to public health or safety.

(c) Permit Process.

(1) A property owner seeking a permit pursuant to subsection (b) shall submit a permit request to the Department by emailing to WJT@wildlife.ca.gov, or mailing to California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, Attention: Western Joshua Tree Permitting, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090 the following information:

(A) The name, telephone number, mailing address, and email address of the property owner seeking the permit.

(B) The street address of the property on which the western Joshua tree to be removed or trimmed is located. If no street address is available, the property owner may include the assessor's parcel number.

(C) Photographs of the western Joshua tree that visually depict either:

1. That the tree is dead and meets one or more of the three requirements of subsection (b); or
2. The specific limb or limbs to be trimmed and that the limb or limbs to be trimmed meet one or more of the three requirements of subsection (b).

(2) Within thirty days of receipt of a request for a permit pursuant to subsection (c)(1), the department shall either issue a permit allowing for the removal or trimming or deny the request if the request does not demonstrate a permit can be issued pursuant to this section.

(A) If the department issues the permit, it shall do so by email, or by U.S. mail if the permit request was received by mail, and it will provide the property owner sixty days in which to complete the removal or trimming.

(B) If the department denies the permit request, the property owner may resubmit the request with additional information and photographs. Resubmissions pursuant to this subsection shall be processed as new permit requests.

(3) Within thirty days of completing the removal of a dead western Joshua tree or trimming one or more limbs from a western Joshua tree in accordance with a permit issued pursuant to this section, to demonstrate compliance with this section the property owner shall by mail or email photographs of the site at which the dead western Joshua tree was removed or the western Joshua tree that was trimmed pursuant to the permit.

(d) Limitations.

(1) Nothing in this section is intended to be or shall be construed to be a general project approval. It shall be the responsibility of each project proponent receiving take authorization pursuant to this section to obtain all necessary permits and approvals and to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

(2) Nothing in this section is intended to or shall be construed to limit the terms and conditions, including those relating to compensatory mitigation, the department includes in incidental take permits for western Joshua tree issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b).

Note: Authority cited: Sections 399 and 2084, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 399 and 2084, Fish and Game Code.