

## **Behold the Elusive Rare Plant: A CDFW Guide to Quality, Effective, and Efficient Botanical Surveys**

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CDFW has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary to sustain populations. As trustee agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) §15386, CDFW provides expertise in reviewing environmental documents and designs protocols to minimize potential adverse impacts to biological resources. As a Review Team member, pursuant to the California Forest Practice Rules, CDFW reviews all timber harvesting plans and makes recommendations, when necessary, to avoid or mitigate potential impacts. Surveys conducted according to CDFW's "Protocols for surveying and evaluating impacts to special status native plant populations and natural communities" (2009) are likely to meet CEQA requirements for adequate disclosure and avoidance of potential adverse impacts to public trust resources.

Timber harvesting can significantly reduce the viability and persistence of rare species, or conversely, may benefit the species by creating or enhancing and managing rare plant habitat. The outcome is largely dependent upon the quality of the pre-disturbance survey and availability of species-specific information derived from prior surveys, monitoring, and research efforts. Currently, many surveys fall short, and opportunities are passing by to better manage a landscape under mounting anthropogenic pressures for a diversity of values.

We present a guide to conducting quality botanical surveys, highlighting common deviations and omissions from the protocol that can result in project delays, missed detections, and avoidable impacts. We cover: the requirements of a "qualified botanist", adequate scoping, survey methodology, resources, and adequate reporting. This guide may offer insights to both the seasoned professional, and the aspiring student.