



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

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## Attachment C

### GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT STUDIES

The following guidelines for preparing Special-Status Plant Studies are intended to help applicants and/or their representatives determine (a) **who** should be considered qualified to conduct such studies, (b) **how** the necessary field work should be conducted, and (c) **what** information should be contained in the survey report. **Napa County will not accept Special-Status Plant Studies that are not conducted according to these guidelines.**

**BACKGROUND:** Special-status plant surveys are conducted in order to determine the environmental effects of proposed projects on special-status plants and rare plant communities.

Special-status plants are not limited to those species which have been "listed" by state and federal agencies as rare, threatened, or endangered but include any species that, based on all available data, can be shown to be rare, threatened, and/or endangered under the following definitions:

A species, subspecies, or variety of plant is "endangered" when the prospects of its survival and reproduction are compromised by exploitation, predation, competition, or disease. A plant is "threatened" when it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future in the absence of protection measures. A plant is "rare" when, although not presently threatened with extinction, the species, subspecies, or variety is found in such small numbers throughout its range that it may become endangered if its environment worsens.

Included are California Native Plant Society List 1B, 2, and 3 plants as well as plants that are rare or identified as sensitive biotic communities in the Napa County Baseline Data Report, 2005.

Rare natural communities are those communities that are of highly limited distribution in the State, the County or the local area. These communities may or may not contain rare, threatened, or endangered species. The most current version of the California Natural Diversity Database's List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities may be used as a guide to the names and status of communities.

**PERSONS QUALIFIED TO PREPARE:** The botanical consultant used must possess the following qualifications:

- a. experience in conducting floristic field surveys;
- b. knowledge of plant taxonomy and plant community ecology;
- c. familiarity with the plants of the area, including all special-status plant species found there;
- d. familiarity with the appropriate state and federal statutes related to plants and plant collecting;  
**AND**
- e. experience with analyzing impacts of development on native plant species and communities.

**FIELD SURVEY PROTOCOL:** Field surveys must be conducted in a manner that will locate any special-status plants that may be present. Specifically, special-status plant surveys shall be

- a. *Conducted in the field at the proper time of year when special-status species are both evident and identifiable.* Usually, this is when the plants are flowering. When special-status plants are known to occur in the type(s) of habitat present in the project area, nearby accessible occurrences of the plants (reference sites) should be observed to determine that the species are identifiable at the time of the survey.
- b. *Floristic in nature.* A floristic survey requires that every plant observed be identified to the extent necessary to determine its rarity and listing status. In addition, a sufficient number of visits spaced throughout the growing season are necessary to accurately determine the plants that exist on the site. In order to properly characterize the site and document the completeness of the survey, a complete list of plants observed on the site should be included in every botanical survey report.
- c. *Conducted in a manner that is consistent with conservation ethics.* Collections (voucher specimens) of rare, threatened, or endangered species, or suspected rare, threatened, or endangered species should be made only when such actions would not jeopardize the continued existence of the population and in accordance with applicable state and federal permit requirements. A collection permit from the Habitat Conservation Planning Branch of DFG is required for collection of state-listed plant species. Voucher specimens should be deposited at recognized public herbaria for future reference. Photography should be used to document plant identification and habitat whenever possible, but especially when the population cannot withstand collection of voucher specimens.
- d. *Conducted using systematic field techniques in all habitats of the site* to ensure a thorough coverage of potential impact areas.
- e. *Well documented.* When a rare, threatened, or endangered plant (or rare plant community) is located, a California Native Species (or Community) Field Survey Form or equivalent written form, accompanied by a copy of the appropriate portion of a 7.5 minute topographic map with the occurrence mapped, shall be completed and submitted to the California Natural Diversity Database. Locations may be best documented using global positioning systems (GPS), transposed to a map, and presented in hard copy and digital forms.

**REPORT CONTENTS:** Botanical reports submitted to Napa County shall at a minimum contain the following information:

- a. *Project description*, including a detailed map of the project location and study area;
- b. A written description of the *biological setting* referencing the community nomenclature used and a vegetation map;

- c. Detailed description of *survey methodology* utilized including a map clearly showing the boundaries of the area surveyed. Dates of field survey, total person-hours spent thereon, and the name of the field investigator(s) shall be indicated;
- d. **Results** including detailed maps showing the distribution of each special-status plant found (investigators are encouraged to provide GPS data and maps documenting population boundaries). Information on plant numbers and densities shall be provided and core populations shall, if present, be identified;
- e. An **assessment of potential impacts**. This should include a map clearly showing the distribution of each special-status plants found within the parcel and vicinity in relation to proposed activities;
- f. Discussion of the **significance** of special-status plant populations in the project area considering nearby populations and total species distribution;
- g. **Recommended measures to avoid**, minimize, or offset potential project-related impacts to special-status plant and animal species, as well as buffers or avoidance areas to watercourse, wetlands and other aquatic resources necessary to mitigate adverse impacts and comply with applicable local, state and federal regulatory requirements;
- h. A **list of all plants observed** on and within 500 feet of the project area. Plants should be identified to the taxonomic level necessary to determine whether or not they are special-status;
- i. **Description of reference site(s)** visited and phenological development of special-status plant(s);
- j. Copies of all **California Native Species Field Survey Forms or Natural Community Field Survey Forms; AND**
- k. **References** cited, persons contacted, herbaria visited, and the location of voucher specimens.