

JOSHUA TREES ARE STATE AND COUNTY PROTECTED

Effective July 2023, California enacted the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA), which continues to protect the western Joshua tree ("Joshua tree") as a candidate species (listed October 9, 2020) under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The WJTCA prohibits the taking, exporting, importing, trimming, possessing, purchasing, or selling of any western Joshua tree, whether dead or alive, without an Incidental Take Permit (ITP). In addition, any project that directly or indirectly impacts western Joshua tree habitat will also require an ITP. Applicants must obtain an ITP directly from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).



Why are Joshua Trees Protected?

The western Joshua tree is a unique and iconic species found in California's desert ecosystems. It provides important habitat for birds, mammals, insects, and other native wildlife. Due to threats like habitat loss, wildfire, and climate change, the species is protected under the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA).

Conservation Plan

To better protect the species while accommodating development, the CDFW is developing a Western Joshua Tree Conservation Plan. For more information on the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Plan, please visit: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/WJT/Conservation-Plan>

Helpful Tips for Property Owners

- **Look Before You Plan:** Always verify if western Joshua trees are present on your property before beginning any work. Young Joshua trees look like small bushes. When in doubt, contact CDFW.
- **Avoid Tree Impacts:** Consider site design changes to avoid or minimize impacts to trees, their root zones and surrounding seedbanks. Activities such as grading, scraping, or clearing vegetation, without touching the tree, can still cause harm.
- **Permits are Required:** Any activity that could remove, damage, or impact a Joshua tree will require an ITP from CDFW.

General Permitting

Ministerial projects will continue to be processed as prior to the enactment of the WJTCA. However, applicants MUST apply for an ITP from CDFW if their project may impact Joshua trees. If you know or suspect that your project may require an ITP, you are encouraged to contact CDFW at WJT@wildlife.ca.gov with questions or to request assistance.

For more information on Western Joshua Tree Conservation Permitting, please visit: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/WJT/Permitting>

Within **Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs)**, Joshua trees are classified as a Category 1 SEA Resource, meaning any impacts to Joshua trees will automatically require a SEA Conditional Use Permit (CUP), unless the project qualifies for an exemption. Single-family residences located in the Antelope Valley Planning Area remain exempt from the SEA ordinance. As a result, these projects do not require a SEA CUP, but they will still require an ITP from CDFW if the project impacts Joshua trees.

Discretionary projects, both within and outside of the SEAs, may require mitigation for impacts to Joshua trees and are subject to an ITP from CDFW. As the CEQA lead agency for a discretionary project, the County will work with applicants to identify and incorporate mitigation measures, including early project design avoidance of Joshua trees, to facilitate the issuance of an ITP from CDFW. Where mitigation is required, land acquisition is favored over translocation or replanting.