

**Fact Sheet**  
**Slender Orcutt Grass (*Orcuttia tenuis*)**

**Taxonomy and Physical Description**

- The genus *Orcuttia* in the grass family Poaceae, subfamily Chloridoideae, and is a member of the Orcuttieae tribe.
- *O. tenuis* grows as single erect to decumbent stems or in small tufts consisting of a few stems ranging from 5 to 20 cm (2.0 to 8 inches) in height and are about 0.5 mm in diameter. Terrestrial leaves are 1.5 to 2 mm wide.
- The plants are sparsely hairy and branch only from the upper half of the stem.
- The inflorescence comprises more than half of the plant's height, and the spikelets are more or less evenly spaced throughout the inflorescence. Each spikelet contains from 5 to 20 florets.

**Habitat**

- *O. tenuis* is dependent on vernal pools; however, it has been reported from other natural and artificial wetlands such as stock ponds, and borrow pits.
- The plants tolerate inundation and therefore live in deeper pools or in deeper areas of pools than Green's tuctoria.
- Primary habitat requirement appears to be inundation of sufficient duration and quantity to eliminate most competition and to meet the plant's physiological requirements for prolonged inundation, followed by gradual desiccation
- Occupied pools are or were underlain by iron-silica cemented hardpan, tuffaceous alluvium, or claypan.

**Distribution and Abundance**

- *O. tenuis* is endemic to California's Central Valley and Modoc Plateau regions.
- Known occurrences include Lake, Lassen County, Plumas, Sacramento, Shasta, Siskiyou County, Tehama, and Modoc County.
- The draft 5-year review for this species reported 79 occurrences.
- Sixteen occurrences have been reported from the Modoc NF, some which are very large, with 8 having more than 100,000 plants each.
- Elevations of occupied pools range from 90 to 5,760 feet.
- Population size varies widely from year to year (up to 4 orders of magnitude), and populations that have no visible plants one year can reappear in large numbers in later years.
- Population fluctuations may be due to annual variations in weather, particularly rainfall, to changes in management, or combinations of the two.

**Reproduction and Conservation Needs**

- Optimum germination of *O. tenuis* is achieved through stratification followed by warm days and mild nights.
- Peak flowering of this species typically occurs in May in the Central Valley but not until June or July on the Modoc Plateau.
- Conservation needs are (1) habitat protection, (2) adaptive habitat management and monitoring, (3) status surveys, (4) research, and (5) public participation and outreach (USFWS 2005).