

Background

At the June 2012 Board meeting, staff provided an update on discussions with the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and Inyo County regarding the potential transfer of ownership of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery from DFG to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). The potential transfer of ownership is being considered due to the fact DFG no longer operates the facility as a hatchery due to several constraints and would like to dispose of the site. SNC was identified as a possible temporary party for the transfer, given that our statutory authority provides greater flexibility to work with the local community in developing a long term plan.

Current Status

Several processes are underway since the June 2012 Board meeting and are close to being completed, including the following:

- The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), acting on behalf of DFG, is completing their due diligence including an appraisal, title report, and Phase 1 environmental report.
- DFG has finalized a draft document identifying areas of concern and restrictions for future use of the facility that will become conditions of a transfer.
- Inyo County is developing a transfer agreement to establish protocol for a possible transfer of ownership from SNC to the county (in the event SNC takes ownership). They are also developing and preparing for a planning process that will create a strategic plan for the facility that will identify possible long term uses.

SNC Staff is monitoring all of these efforts and expediting discussions as needed among all of the parties involved in this effort.

Next Steps

WCB will complete their due diligence by the end of 2012 and be prepared to act upon a possible transfer, if and when appropriate. SNC Staff may be facilitating additional discussions between Inyo County, DFG, and the Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery to clarify understandings in order to finalize the conditions of future use document drafted by DFG

It will be critical to the SNC's decision on taking temporary ownership of the hatchery, that Inyo County continue to demonstrate progress on the development of their transfer agreement and long-term plan for future use of the facilities. This will include identifying an ultimate owner of the property, and a specific timeline for a transfer. SNC Staff will participate in the development of the long-term plan, as needed and as available. SNC staff will further identify the process and any implications of accepting the property, and develop a recommendation about SNC's future role in the transfer of ownership process for the SNC Board's consideration and approval, when appropriate.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.