

Background

At the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) March 2008 meeting, the Board authorized a \$1,000,000 grant to The Sierra Fund for the fee-title acquisition of 2,706-acres in Nevada and Yuba Counties along the Yuba River. The property is commonly referred to as the Rice's Crossing Property and spans approximately 9.5 miles of the Yuba River. The grant was authorized with the understanding that additional funds were being sought by project partners (Yuba County Water Agency, The Trust for Public Land and the Bear Yuba Land Trust) to complete the acquisition, and that The Sierra Fund would contribute the entire SNC grant amount towards the purchase. The Sierra Fund did not and still does not intend to hold title to the property after acquisition. The Yuba County Water Agency had agreed to own and manage the property for purposes consistent with the grant.

Since the SNC grant was awarded, the project partners have all agreed that the Bear Yuba Land Trust would be the most appropriate entity to own and manage the property based on their management of other nearby properties and alignment with their primary mission. Transfer of SNC grant to the Bear Yuba Land Trust will result in a more efficient sales transaction and ensure that long term management responsibilities for the property rest with the grantee.

The project partners have been successful in securing additional grants from The Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant Program and the California Natural Resources Agency River Parkways Grant Program. The partners now have all of the funds necessary to complete the transaction and are proposing to close escrow as soon as possible.

Current Status

All funding agencies have been consulted on this proposed action and the Boards of The Sierra Fund and the Bear Yuba Land Trust have each passed resolutions to support this action. The Bear Yuba Land Trust is eligible to receive grants from the SNC and has successfully managed two SNC grants. The California Department of General Services Real Estate Services Division has reviewed and approved a certified appraisal of the property and supports the value of the proposed purchase.

When the Board authorized the original grant in 2008, the SNC completed and filed a Notice of Exemption to satisfy its requirement to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project was found to be Categorical Exempt per CEQA Guidelines [Article 19, Sections 15313, 15316, and 15325](#). If the Board authorizes the proposed transfer, staff will file another Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse citing the same exemptions.

The Bear Yuba Land Trust would accept all of the grant terms and requirements included in the original grant agreement.

Next Steps

If this request to change grantees is approved, staff will work with The Sierra Fund and the Bear Yuba Land Trust to complete the transfer process.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the transfer of grant SNC 079 from The Sierra Fund to the Bear Yuba Land Trust and direct staff to prepare the appropriate documents to facilitate the transfer process.