

### **Background**

At the December 2012 Board meeting, Staff provided an update on the discussions with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW – formerly Department of Fish and Game) and Inyo County regarding the potential transfer of temporary ownership of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery from DFW to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). The potential transfer of ownership is being considered due to the fact DFW 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 interim party for the transfer, given that our statutory authority provides greater flexibility to work with the local community in developing a long term plan for the future ownership and use of the facility.

### **Current Status**

Several tasks have been completed since the December 2012 Board meeting including the following:

- The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), acting on behalf of DFW has acquired the appraisal and title report for the facility.
- Inyo County authorized a Phase 1 environmental report for the facility that was completed in January 2013. Based on the findings of the Phase 1 report, Inyo County has authorized a Phase II environmental report, scheduled to be completed and delivered by the end of May 2013.
- DFW submitted a final document outlining areas of concern and restrictions for future use of the facility. No significant issues were raised that might affect the eventual transfer.
- Inyo County has hired a new Deputy Chief Administrator who will be overseeing the planning process that will create a strategic plan for the facility which is intended to identify possible long term uses and potential third party ownership.

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

### **Next Steps**

SNC staff is working with DFW, WCB and Inyo County to draft a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will clearly outline the steps for development of master plan, possible transfer of ownership and definition of roles and responsibilities for each entity in this effort. SNC Staff will participate in the planning process being undertaken by Inyo County for the future use of the facility. SNC Staff will also work with the Attorney General's office to further identify all of the required steps in a transfer process and any implications of accepting the property. As these final discovery processes become complete, SNC Staff will develop a recommendation about SNC's potential role, if any, in the transfer of ownership process for the SNC Board's consideration and action.

### **Recommendation**

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