

Background

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) recently approached the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) with a request to consider accepting the ownership of a 40 acre parcel on Oak Creek, just northwest of the community of Independence in Inyo County. This site is home to the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery, an historic and iconic landmark in the Eastern Sierra. Since it is no longer operating as a hatchery due to a variety of constraints, CDFG is required to dispose of it either by sale, exchange or transfer. Currently the hatchery and the surrounding park-like grounds are being used for community events, private functions and as a tourist attraction. A local nonprofit, Friends of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery has been managing and operating a small on-site interpretive center and gift shop, conducting repair and maintenance while fundraising to enhance the property and sustain its programs. Inyo County has supported the Friends efforts with in-kind services and is currently involved in the on-going discussions about the hatchery's future.

Current Status

A site visit was conducted in June and involved representatives from the CDFG, Inyo County, Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and SNC. Subsequently, a meeting was convened to continue to explore options for conveying the property to a third party, perhaps temporarily, while the county and community conduct a feasibility study, potentially identify resources and develop a business or master plan for the property.

Next Steps

Inyo County and SNC are developing a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which will focus on defining how the parties could work together to ensure that the hatchery remain a viable asset for the community, the County and to the area's visitors.

Recommendation

No action is necessary by the Board. Staff will continue to work with Inyo County, CDFG and other interested stakeholders to determine if there is a value-added role for SNC to play in the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery project and report back to the Board on progress.