

\$110,000 given to San Diego zoo to help save northern white rhino

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A Los Angeles-based philanthropic organization is providing money to help San Diego's Frozen Zoo find ways to bring the northern white rhino back from the brink of extinction, zoo officials announced Thursday.

The Seaver Institute, which provides funds to assist in the arts, education and science, has awarded \$110,000 to San Diego Zoo Global to speed its work on the genome sequencing of the northern and southern white rhinos.

Nola, a female northern white rhino at the zoo's Safari Park, is one of only five of her subspecies in the world. One is in a zoo in the Czech Republic and three are in a preserve in Kenya. All five are considered beyond their reproductive years.

The long-term goal is to use cells from the northern white rhino and the more populous southern white rhino to create an embryo that could be brought to term by a female southern white rhino.

The Frozen Zoo has genetic material from 12 northern white rhinos kept in subzero vats, including sperm and testicular tissue from the male Angalifu who died at the Safari Park in December.

Victoria Dean, president of the Seaver Institute, said the organization wants to help researchers "take advantage of the, until now, theoretical value of the Frozen Zoo."

The work of the zoo's Institute for Conservation Research will be done based on a process developed by Jeanne Loring, director of regenerative medicine at the La Jolla-based Scripps Research Institute.

"The reproductive system of rhinos is very complex and there is still so much we do not know," said Barbara Durrant, reproductive physiologist at the zoo's Institute for Conservation Research.